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Editorial

We have been thinking of producing another issue of JEBS which celebrates the work of our students, and with this number we do so, including three articles, two by current students and one by a recent graduate. The articles are completed by a fourth from one of our Senior Research Fellows, Ivana Noble.

Her article invites us to consider the case of Jan Hus, and his role in ecumenical discussion. Focusing first on Hus's theology, she then looks at how the memory of Hus is treated in various churches and how problematic that can be. In doing so, she invites us to reflect on how we use the various traditions or memories which help constitute who we are as churches.

In the article on Hus reference is made to J.B. Metz's concept of the 'dangerous memory' of Jesus, and in a sense this is what Beth Jackson focuses on in her article, in which she examines the possibility of proclaiming the uniqueness of Jesus in the light of the encounter with other world religions. Wishing to reject the pluralist position of such as John Hick, whilst also recognising the challenge, she finds a possible way forward through concentration on orthopraxis, on Christ, herald, servant and risen Lord, present in and through the liberating power of the Spirit.

Katarzyna Jarosz reflects on the Baptist Mission in Poland in the 19th century. She shows how it was successful in the German-speaking context in which it mainly operated, again often through the praxis of the early Baptist communities who proved themselves as much in deed as in word. Nevertheless, it showed itself less able to insert itself in the Polish-speaking and largely Catholic context. This may suggest ways forward for contextualising our missionary endeavour in the very different situation in which we live today.

Our final article is by Helle Liht. She focuses on the possibility of inculcating a sense of environmental ethics in Estonian baptistic communities, through a more cosmic and less anthropocentric Christology and through a more environmentally aware worship. Although she addresses primarily the Estonian baptistic context, her work has implications, I would suggest, for most Christian communities in most countries.

Tim F T Noble
Academic Team, IBTS

Jan Hus in Ecumenical Discussion

The task of this paper is twofold. First, I aim to introduce Jan Hus (c.+1370-1415), a Roman Catholic priest, university philosopher and theologian. He was one of the figures responsible for attempts at church reform at the beginning of the fifteenth century in Bohemia, and remains a controversial figure in the history of the church. Hus was accused of heresy and burnt to death at the Council of Constance. Ever since, there has been a discussion, involving Protestant, Catholic and Orthodox theologians, as to whether he was a heretic or a saint.¹ We will look at his theology and trace some of the issues which divided his audience, but to be able to understand these issues, we will have to start with a sketch of the ecclesio-political situation of Hus's time and its impact on him. The second task is to place the conflicting issues around Hus's personality and work into a wider landscape, and to examine the role of controversial memories in building different strands of Christian tradition, so as to ask questions concerning the historical and symbolic role of people like Hus. My basic thesis in this paper is that for healing the divisions and overcoming the injustices and misunderstandings within the Christian family, purely historical research is insufficient, however important and necessary it may be.² So, historical research has to be complemented by a process of learning to read stories, symbols and images of other traditions, which also combine fragments of facts and multitudes of meaning, as our own tradition does, and whose stories, symbols and images shape their memory, their certainties, their wounds, and their expectations.

1. Personality of Jan Hus and his Time

Let me start with some factual information concerning Hus's background, his personal history and work. This will enable me to proceed to discuss key issues in his theology, which gave rise to controversial interpretations.

¹ The dispute over Hus's place within church history from an ecumenical point of view is represented in a Colloquium, 'Jan Hus among Epochs, Nations and Confessions', held in Bayreuth in 1993. It was preceded by the work of many theologians and historians, among others Stefan Swiezawski on the Catholic side, and F.M. Bartoš and A. Molnár on the Protestant side. This was inspired by the wish of Pope John Paul II, who, during his visit to Prague in 1990, appealed to Czech theologians to prepare a reevaluation of Hus's case. The response of Orthodox theologians lies in the fact that the Orthodox Church in Bohemia holds a memorial to Jan Hus, martyr and saint, on July 6th.

² Here I find inspiring Gregory of Nyssa's appreciation of *historia*, seeing it as a foundation whilst being aware of the need to progress from this starting point to *theoria*. For Gregory *historia* means a paraphrase of the biblical story, and *theoria* an application of the story by means of contemplative reading to discern its spiritual import. See Gregory of Nyssa, *The Life of Moses* (New York: Paulist Press, Toronto: Ramsey, 1978). I will try to extend the meaning of *historia* and include in it historical research concerning facts about any given personality or situation, and from there proceed to a symbolic reading.

Jan Hus faced the deepening crisis of the church at the turn of the 14th and 15th centuries, which brought to the fore the problem of authority with a new urgency. In 1302 it was proclaimed that obedience to the Pope was needed for salvation.³ In 1378 two popes were elected, Urban VI of Rome and Clement VII of Avignon. They were at war with each other and pursued each other with anathemas. In order to find a solution, the synod of Pisa (1409) suspended both popes and elected a new one, Alexander V. The latter was succeeded by John XXIII, who, later, was accused of criminal actions, including piracy, at the Council of Constance. The two former popes did not resign, and so there were three popes demanding obedience and taxes. The papal schism, which lasted forty years, led Christians into wars and provoked strong criticism.⁴

Influenced by John Wycliffe's 'anti-nominalism', which did not accept demands of obedience without exception on the part of the mediating authority of the ecclesiastical hierarchy,⁵ and by Conrad Waldhauser's and Jan Milíč of Kroměříž's appeal to understand ecclesiastical reform in moral terms,⁶ Hus entered the reform movement, initially as a welcome critic of the vices within the church. As such, he was invited by the archbishop to preach at synods,⁷ and held a stable position in the University of Prague, where he was under the protection of the king. In this first period Hus wrote mainly in Latin, for an educated audience, which sought church reform 'from above'. But he also preached in Czech at Bethlehem Chapel, the centre of the reform movement in Prague, where a more popular audience gathered. In his sermons he helped lay people to form their own judgement based on Scripture, and educated them in the

³ This was claimed by Pope Boniface VIII in his bull 'Unam sanctam'. It says: 'Porro **subesse Romano Pontifici** omni humanae creaturae declaramus, dicimus, diffinimus omnino esse de necessitate salutis.' DS 875.

⁴ See also F.M. Bartoš, *Čechy v době Husově 1378-1415* [Bohemia in the time of Hus 1378-1415], (Praha: Laichter, 1947).

⁵ John Wycliffe (1329-1384) represented the second wave of anti-nominalist thought, reacting against Ockham and Scotus and their scepticism about the employment of the direct transcendent authority of God in the life of a Christian.

⁶ Conrad Waldhauser was invited by Archbishop Arnošt to come to preach in Prague in 1363. His sermons, as well as influencing his followers (among others Jan Milíč of Kroměříž and Matěj of Janov), initiated reform in Bohemian Christianity. In Hus's time Masters of Prague University also took part in public preaching. See V. Novotný, *Mistr Jan Hus. Život a dílo* [Master Jan Hus, Life and Teaching] Vol. I (Praha: Laichter, 1919), pp.41-47; D. Duka, 'Předchůdci Mistra Jana Husa (Konrád Waldhauser, Jan Milíč z Kroměříže, Matěj z Janova)' [Predecessors of Jan Hus (Konrád Waldhauser, Jan Milíč of Kroměříž, Matěj of Janova)], in *Jan Hus mezi epochami, národy a konfesemi* [Jan Hus among Epochs, Nations and Confessions; HENC] (Česká křesťanská akademie and HTF UK, Prague, 1995), pp. 51-53.

⁷ See J. Hus, 'Synodální kázání' [Synodal Sermons] in *Sebrané spisy latinské* [Collected Latin Works] Vol. 1 (Praha: Bursík, 1904), pp. 135-244.

foundations of the Christian faith.⁸ This audience, ultimately, became decisive in Hus's later development.

By 1409 Hus was having problems.⁹ As Rector of the University he protested against the public burning of Wycliffe's writings,¹⁰ and against the archbishop's forbidding of folk preaching, and thus came into direct conflict with him. And when the sellers of indulgences appeared in Prague, collecting money for the war between John XXIII and the King of Naples, Hus was at the centre of organising a protest, which gained him an anathema, later reinforced with an interdict: If Hus would not leave Prague, no sacraments would be administered there. In the years 1412-1414 Hus preached in the country, living with his friends at Kozí Hrádek, Krakovec and other places. He also wrote mainly in Czech and among his Czech writings the most famous are *Homilies*, *Exposition of Faith*, *of the Decalogue and of the Our Father*, *Books on Simony*,¹¹ and in Latin a book heavily inspired by Wycliffe, *De Ecclesia*. Hus realised more and more how the application of a realist philosophy to church teaching, as Wycliffe had taught him, recovered the voice of the Bible and of the Church Fathers in calling the Church to be faithful to its own heritage, and most of all, to be faithful to God. Crowds of people followed Hus to hear his homilies in the country and he became the symbol of a dangerous alternative to the ecclesial *status quo*.

Thus, in 1414, Hus was invited to the Council of Constance, which had been convoked to renew order in the church. The promises of safe passage, as well as of a public hearing there, were broken: he was imprisoned after his arrival, accused of heresy and, without being afforded any possibility of a public defence, he was found guilty. On 6th July 1415 Hus was burnt to death as a heretic. This event provoked a strong reaction in Bohemia, and gave rise to protests which grew into the Hussite movement. As Hus was not recognised as a reformer by the Council Fathers, so their effort to reform the church was doubted by the church in Bohemia. Thus these two initiatives to reestablish order in the church did

⁸ Lay education took as its main themes sermons on the Decalogue, on the Our Father and on the Creed. See S. Bylina, 'La catéchisation du peuple en Bohême aux XIV^e et XV^e siècles' in *The Bohemian Reformation and Religious Practice*, Vol. 3, Eds. Z.V. David and D.R. Holeton (Academy of the Sciences of the Czech Republic Main Library, Prague 2000), pp. 25-33.

⁹ It was the year when he was elected Rector of the University, just after King Václav IV issued the 'Decree of Kutná Hora', limiting the influence of the German Masters and leading to their leaving to Leipzig to found their own University. This king's decree provoked an angry reaction from Archbishop Zbynek, and created a tension in which Hus had to operate.

¹⁰ See J. Hus, 'Obrana článků Viklefových' [Defence of Wycliffe's Articles], in *Sebrané spisy latinské* [Collected Latin Works] Vol. 2, (Praha: Bursík, 1904), pp. 267-332.

¹¹ Published in the collections *Magistri Iohannis Hus Opera Omnia I: Výklady* [Expositions]; *IV: Drobné spisy české* [Small Czech Writings] (Academia, Praha, 1975, 1985).

not coincide,¹² and the opposition between them was strengthened by the crusades, the Hussite wars and by the ‘memories of division and of violence’ on both parts.¹³

2. Hus's theology

In this part I will examine some of the controversial issues in Hus's theology, involving his understanding of the church, of faith, practice and heresy, of the mediating authority of the church and the immediate authority of Christ.¹⁴

2.1 The notion of the church

When we trace Hus's understanding of the church, we have to be aware of two things. First, Hus, as a good medieval theologian, builds his treatises as commentaries on biblical and patristic sources; second, the structure and themes of his main work on the church, *De ecclesia*, are heavily influenced by John Wycliffe.¹⁵ Hus opens this tract with a statement:

As every Christian here in the world is to believe faithfully the holy and catholic church and to love the Lord Jesus Christ, the

¹² The nominalism of the Fathers of Constance gave rise to conciliarism, as opposed to papalism, which was still shared by the more conservative realist theologians of that time. But as for Gerson or Peter d'Ailly, the Council was to be the highest authority; they were not ready to allow exceptions based on a realist claim to the direct relation to the authority of Christ. If they made a precedent here, then anybody could find ways round obeying the Council, and the task of achieving unity would become practically impossible. For Hus, a realist, the authority of the Council had to be subjected to the authority of Christ, not only eschatologically, but here and now, as otherwise, the authority of the Council would lose its ground, its referentiality, and cease to be valid. Thus, he felt himself to be an equal partner for the Council Fathers and equipped to discuss, on the basis of Scripture and Tradition, what Christ demands of the church. But he was not ready for an enforced subjection to opinions he was not convinced of. For more detailed argumentation, see I. Dolejšová, ‘Hus a Pálež: Realismus versus nominalismus’ in HENC, 1995, pp. 84-85.

¹³ This can be traced not only in historical documents, but also in art – and here not only in portraits of Hus as a heretic, but also of the Council as a gathering of the forces of the Antichrist - see e.g. the painting ‘Hus před Kostnickým koncilem’ [Hus in front of the Council of Constance] by Brožík.

¹⁴ Parts of this section have been published in my articles: ‘Eschatological Elements in Jan Hus's Ecclesiology and their Implications for a Later Development of the Church in Bohemia’ in *Verborgener Gott - verborgene Kirche? Die kenotische Theologie und ihre ekklesiologischen Implikationen*. Ed. J. Brosseder, (Verlag W. Kohlhammer, Forum Systematik, Bd. 14, Stuttgart, Berlin, Köln, 2001), pp. 138-155; ‘Eschatological Elements in Hus's Understanding of Orthopraxis’ in *The Bohemian Reformation and Religious Practice*, Vol. 4, Eds. Z.V. David and D.R. Holton (Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic Main Library, Praha, 200), pp. 127-141.

¹⁵ This theme was dealt with in other studies. More recently, see V. Herold, ‘How Wycliffite was the Bohemian Reformation?’, in *The Bohemian Reformation and Religious Practice*, Vol. 2 (Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic Main Library, Prague, 1998), pp. 25-38; A. Hudson, *Premature Reformation* (Oxford, 1988); E. Molnár, ‘Viklef, Hus a problém autority [Wycliffe, Hus and the Problem of Authority], in HENC, pp. 104-117; B. Töpfer, ‘Lex Christi, dominium a církevní hierarchie u Jana Husa ve srovnání s pojetím u Jana Viklefa’ [Lex Christi, dominium and ecclesial hierarchy in Jan Hus in comparison with John Wycliffe], HENC, pp. 96-103.

bridegroom of this church, and to love the church, his bride, he cannot love this spiritual mother unless he has got to know her at least in faith - and therefore he has to know her in faith and from there to honour her as a special mother.¹⁶

Hus does not doubt the role of the church in the process of salvation. He adheres to the credal faith and interprets it first in reference to Augustine. Knowing the church in faith and loving and honouring her as a special mother is, according to Hus, from the very beginning rooted in a loving relationship to Jesus Christ. The holy catholic church is 'the highest of all creation'.¹⁷ Then Hus emphasises what seems obvious, that the church cannot be worshipped in place of God. He states that God dwells in the church, and eternally will: she is the 'bride of the Lord Jesus Christ', the 'body of Christ', the 'house of God built to serve its Lord'.¹⁸ This church is spread throughout the world, yet is one, and consists in *ecclesiam triumphantem, militantem et dormientem*. The triumphant church is that of saints resting in their heavenly home after having struggled against Satan and winning; the militant church is that of the predestined here on earth, making their pilgrimage to the heavenly home and still struggling; and the suffering church is that of the predestined in purgatory, needing to be purified and sanctified by grace in order to reach their home in heaven.¹⁹ Thus, the church's unity is eschatological, but Hus argues against what he calls an Aristotelian understanding, that the church is the gathering of all people. There is a church of sheep and of goats, according to him, but only the former is the holy church, the latter is the church of the repudiated. The church, as we experience her here and now, is *ecclesia permixta*, where the good and the ill grow together until the harvest.²⁰ Yet for Hus's understanding the ultimate horizon is decisively already here and now, although our knowledge of it is limited.

One of the controversial moments is the fact that Hus's definitions operate with a polarised typology: the church of the predestined – the church of the damned, or the church – the antichurch, and this typology can be found also in his understanding of Christ – Antichrist, and we could also say faith – antifaith. The antitypes bear some features of the types, but ultimately do not lead to the same goal, but rather to its opposite, and on their way they bear also the opposite qualities, according to which they can be recognised.

¹⁶ Hus, *Tractatus de ecclesia* [DE], Komenského evangelická fakulta bohoslovecká (Praha, 1958), p. 1.

¹⁷ DE: p. 4. Hus refers to Augustine's *Enchiridion*.

¹⁸ DE: pp. 4, 6, 1.

¹⁹ Cf. DE: 8. Again this typology is taken from Augustine.

²⁰ DE: p. 11.

2.2 Faith, practice and heresy

This polarised typology can be traced also in Hus's distinctions between true faith and practice and heresy. Perhaps here we have to start asking whether his approach is extremist – or whether it is an attempt to find tools for dealing with an extreme situation.

Hus expands the notions of orthodoxy and heresy to the practical element of a Christian life. In 'The String of Three Strands', Hus offers a more detailed typology as he distinguishes three types of faith: (i) belief that God is; (ii) belief that what is said about God is true; (iii) faith, loving God above all things.²¹ Neither of the first two types of faith bring salvation, according to him, 'both are affirmed by good as well as by evil people, even by devils'.²² They can be found also in the anti-types of Christ and church. Only the third type of faith brings salvation. Hus is aware that this is the gift of the Holy Spirit, but the fruitfulness of God's presence in the church,²³ according to him, comes fully from God at the same time as it has to be fully embraced by the person. A lack of acceptance on the human side, when combined with a Christian verbal profession, is expressed by Hus in terms of heresy. Then, positively, Hus says that faith, loving God above all things, is recognisable according to God's peace, when truth and justice meet.²⁴

A heretic is, then, according to Hus, a false Christian, someone who claims to follow Christ, yet either in teaching or in practice follows the Antichrist. In his Synodal sermon in 1407²⁵ Hus had already emphasised the element of practical following as vital for a Christian identity:

Only that person can be called a true Christian, who keeps God's commandments and resembles Christ in his morals. The one who is finally strengthened by the virtue and by the power of Christ to oppose the devil's attacks, flesh and blood, princes and authorities, the rulers of this world who are rulers of darkness, evil spirits, is able to put out balls of fire and to stand in perfect opposition on the dark day; ... However, a false Christian rejects the commandment of the Apostle, and having received the name of Christ he takes on himself the weapons of the devil and leads the fight of the Antichrist, he confesses that he knows God, but rejects God in his

²¹ Hus, DSC, 1985: pp.149. See also I. Dolejšova, 'Hus and Pálec', in HENC, 1995: pp. 84-85.

²² Hus, DSC, 1985: p. 149.

²³ For the distinction between the validity and fruitfulness of sacraments, see B. Leeming, *Principles of Sacramental Theology* (London: Longmans, 1960) p. 147.

²⁴ Hus elaborates the criteria for justice later in the *Sermo de pace* [SP] (Praha: Kalich, 1963), pp. 51-70.

²⁵ Hus preached on Eph 6: 14-15: 'Stand therefore, and fasten the belt of truth around your waist, and put on the breastplate of righteousness. As shoes for your feet put on whatever will make you ready to proclaim the gospel of peace.'

actions, he is a false Christ and a true Antichrist; and there is not just one, but many of them.²⁶

And a little further on Hus adds, that ‘everyone who sins in this way, who denies God, is vile and unsubjected, incapable of all good actions, and is to be considered a heretic’.²⁷ Similarly, Christian faithfulness is expressed also in combining teaching and practice. In the ‘Exposition of Faith’ Hus defines a Christian as a ‘truth fighter’. He writes:

So, faithful Christian, search truth, love truth, speak truth, keep truth, defend truth even till death, because the truth will release you from sin, from the devil, from the death of the soul, and at the end from eternal death, that is, eternal separation from the grace of God.²⁸

A. Molnár concludes: ‘The truth Hus talks about here is the truth of God, in its liberating aspect, identical with the personality and work of Jesus Christ.’²⁹ Here we encounter a transition from a principle to a personal authority: the power of truth has been incarnated. The person of Christ gives fulfilment to other authorities. Following the life of Christ brings, according to Hus, reconciliation and peace that one cannot gain otherwise.³⁰

²⁶ J. Hus, *Sebrané spisy latinské I*, [SSL I]ed. V. Flajšhans (Praha: Bursík, 1904), p.162.

²⁷ Hus, SSL I, 1904, p. 169. This theme is developed and actualised in Hus’s Czech writings, in *On Six Hereses* in particular. Hus analyses what he sees as the heresies of the clergy of his time, and similarly his approach to Latin writings, keeping teaching and action together. Thus, he speaks first of ‘a heresy of creation’, which is that ‘foolish priests think that they can create the body of God as many times as they like, and that they are creators of their Creator’. The second is ‘a heresy of believing’, where Hus opposes the requirements ‘to believe in the Virgin Mary, in saints and in popes’ as if these stood above faith in God, which has to come first. Third, ‘a heresy concerning the forgiveness of sins’, claiming that the power of forgiveness belongs to priests and not to God. Fourth is ‘a heresy concerning obedience’, which consists of the demand to obey ‘elders, bishops, lords, fathers and other spiritual as well as worldly rulers in all they command, whether ill or good’. Fifth, ‘a heresy concerning a curse’, that a curse or an excommunication is effective even if an unjust person condemns the just one. And, finally, ‘the heresy of simony’, selling and buying holy things, where the one who sells, ‘has an evil desire to get some temporary material reward for a spiritual thing’ and the one who buys is convinced that it is possible to treat things of God given for salvation as a material possession. In the fifth point, there is an important recognition, namely that for an evil action to be a heresy, the conscious agreement of the person involved is needed. Hus speaks of the ‘witness of our conscience’ and quotes St Gregory: ‘Where conscience does not accuse, or whom it defends, then one is free among the accusers.’ J. Hus, ‘O šesti bludiech’, in *Drobné spisy české* [DSC], *Opera omnia IV* (Academia, Praha, 1985), pp. 271-296.

²⁸ J. Hus, *Výklady* [Expositions], *Opera Omnia I* (Academia, Praha, 1975), p. 69.

²⁹ A. Molnár, *Na rozhraní věků* [At the Boundary of the Ages] (Praha: Vyšehrad, 1985), p. 12. Similarly J.B. Lášek states: ‘The truth is the truth of the living God, that is Christ Himself’. *Jan Hus: Svědek Kristův* [Jan Hus: The Witness of Christ] (Praha: Blahoslav, 1991) p. 17.

³⁰ Later, in *Řeč o míru* [Speech on Peace], which Hus prepared as a defence for the Council of Constance, he quotes Job 9,4 (in the Vulgate version): *Quis ei restitit, et pacem habuit?* (Who opposing Him [God] could retain peace?) (1963), p. 31. He emphasises that peace has to be accompanied by justice: ‘Divine peace does not allow a reconciled man to live in crime’, *Řeč o míru*, (Praha: Kalich, 1963), p. 41.

What opens up here is the old dispute between the Platonic and the Aristotelian tradition as to whether our approach to God is both mediated and direct, or mediated only. If only mediated, then the authorities that mediate it, and in the first place, the authority of the church – here in this life – cannot be questioned. If we have also a direct approach to God, this can relativise the ‘absolute’ demands of the mediating authorities.³¹ Now, Hus, who states that ‘the Roman Church, that is the pope and cardinals, can deceive and be deceived’,³² needs another basis on which to judge this. Will his Augustinianism provide him with it? Will it be that, in his time, the plurality of discourses will no longer be possible, and holding a minority position will be identified with affirming heresy? In order to answer these questions we have to consider his concept of authority in more detail, in particular, how the authority of the church and the authority of Christ are related, and what the implications of it are for our salvation.

2.3 The mediating authority of the church, the immediate authority of Christ

For Hus the authority of the church is dependent on the authority of Christ.³³ The church is here to mediate Christ, but is not the sole means of mediation of Christ’s presence and his judgement. Adherence to God’s commandments, which is especially in Hus’s early period vital for a fruitful mediating of Christ, is something we learn in the Scriptures, in the Church Fathers, Church Councils, even from canonised popes, according to Hus.³⁴ In the earlier paragraph on the church, I suggested that Hus’s emphases on the church’s dependence on Christ were not, as such, controversial. Hus also gave criteria for the church’s mediation of the authority of Christ, when he spoke about the distinction between true faith and practice and heresy. Now the problem came when he claimed that every believer, with the help of other mediating authorities, can judge for her or himself whether the church is exercising the authority of Christ or of the Antichrist. Even if Hus, as a good realist, accepts the possibility of error on his part, and the part of every believer, this confidence which he offered to ordinary

³¹ In the high scholastic period this controversy broke out between Bonaventure, representing the Platonic-Augustinian approach, and Thomas Aquinas, representing the Aristotelian approach. Bonaventure claimed that we have a direct approach to God, because we receive the uncreated gift of grace, the Holy Spirit. While Bonaventure links the grace primarily with the Holy Spirit, Aquinas links it with Christ. He disagrees with Bonaventure’s claim of a direct approach to God and emphasises mediation. Both approaches, however were allowed to coexist, although they led to different understandings of the authority of the church and its role in mediating salvation. See Bonaventure, *Breviloquium* V.1; Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* II, pp. 109-111.

³² J. Hus, ‘Polemiky’ [Polemics] in *Latinské spisy I* [Latin Writings I] (Praha: Bursík, 1904), p. 85.

³³ See Hus, DE 1.

³⁴ See Hus, SSL I: p. 162.

Christians contradicted the understanding of the highest authority of the church, to which one has to subject even one's own judgement without reserve. This subjection without reserve was, for Hus, impossible. To start with, opposing subjections were required of people of his time by different popes at war with each other, and then by the conciliarists claiming that not the Pope but the Council is the highest representative authority of the church. But the problem cut deeper, and brought to the fore the differences between realism and nominalism underpinning the opposing positions.

The adherents of a moderate nominalism claimed that: (i) there is no direct communication between an individual and God; (ii) in the present life, the church stands in the place of God and mediates the divine authority, and as such, obedience to her is equated with obedience to God; (iii) the highest authority, ascribed to a council, which alone has the power even over the election or deposition of a pope, is a matter of discipline and not of moral or spiritual credibility; (iv) there is no possibility of error in the decisions of a council, because there is no higher point of reference.³⁵ The adherents of a moderate realism, including Hus, held: (i) successful mediation of divine authority is dependent on the faith and morals of the one who is appointed to hold ecclesiastical office; otherwise he substitutes his own authority for that of Christ;³⁶ (ii) church authority does not stand in isolation from other authorities, i.e. Scripture, Tradition, or reason and conscience – they are mutually dependent; (iii) a mixture of direct and mediated ways of divine communication is needed; (iv) in a limited situation, a direct appeal to divine authority is superior to a mediated one.³⁷

Hus's realist position developed in two stages. First he claimed that the authority of the church can be measured by the *lex Christi*, which he sees as a combination of other mediating authorities; second, by *vita Christi*, the life of Christ, to which we are related, and which is related to us directly. The life of the church, including church leaders, can be measured also in moral terms, in other words, the behaviour of the church and of her members have to correspond with the law of Christ, as we read about it in the Scriptures, and as it is interpreted by Christian tradition, as well as our

³⁵ This position was held, e.g., by Gerson or Peter d'Ailly, but also by Hus's former colleagues and later opponents Štěpán Pálec and Stanislav of Znojmo. See *Contra Palecz*, Opera 1558 1:259; I. Dolejšová, 'Nominalist and Realist Approaches to the Problem of Authority', in *The Bohemian Reformation and Religious Practice*, eds. Z.V. David and D.R. Holton (Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic Main Library, Praha, 1998), pp. 49-55: 52.

³⁶ Here Hus runs dangerously close to a Donatist position, rejected by Augustine. See Augustine, 'The Seven Books of Augustine, the Bishop of Hippo, on Baptism, against the Donatists', in *The Works of Aurelius Augustine III: Writings in Connection with the Donatist Controversy* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1872).

³⁷ See *Responsories ad articulos Palecz* 1:231. Dolejšová, 1998: pp. 53-54.

reason, united in knowing and doing the truth.³⁸ Hus recalls Wycliffe's argument in the text, which later became a model for the Four Articles of Prague:

From our side, our intention is not to seduce people from true obedience, but *the unity of people being governed by the law of Christ*. Secondly, from our side we intend that the institutions of the Antichrist would not confuse people and would not divide them from Christ, but that the law of Christ and the habits of people agreed upon from the law of the Lord would reign in purity. Thirdly, from our side we intend that clergy would sincerely live according to the gospel of Jesus Christ, giving away all pomp, miserliness and lechery. And fourthly, our side demands and commands that the militant church would be mixed just according to the parts, which the Lord instituted, namely from priests of Christ, who keep his law in purity, from the world's nobility who exhort others to keep Christ's institutions, and from ordinary people serving both other parts according to the law of Christ.³⁹

In the limit situation Hus claims that there is a decisive criterion for keeping the *lex Christi*, namely following the *vita Christi*. In the polemic against John Stokes composed in 1411 as a defence of Wycliffe, he writes that the latter in all his writings passionately tried to bring people back to the *lex Christi* and especially clergy, who were to put aside their *pomposa dominatio* and as apostles follow *vita Christi*.⁴⁰

This transition from a principle to a personal authority became decisive for Hus's later position expressed mainly in his Czech writings addressed to a popular audience, and in his letters and small writings prepared for the Council. Following the *vita Christi* strengthens the eschatological dimension in Hus, and makes the earlier typology less schematic. To follow the life of Christ or, in other words, to live as Christ lived, involves suffering, involves persecution, and might involve even death. Christ's victory is not limited to the here and now, and sometimes is

³⁸ Cf. B. Töpfer, 1995, 'Lex Christi, Dominium and the Ecclesiastical Hierarchy in Jan Hus and John Wyclif Compared', in HENC: p. 100.

³⁹ Hus, 1904: p. 354. The Latin text is as follows: 'cum nostre partis non est intencio seducere populum a vera obediencia, sed quod populus sit unus a lege Christi concorditer regulatus. Secundo, intencio nostre partis est, quod constitutiones antichristiane non efatuent aut dividant populum a Christo, sed quod regnet sincere lex Christi cum consuetudine populi ex lege domini approbata. Et tercio, intencio nostre partis est, quod clerus vivat sincere secundum ewangelium Ihesu Christi, pompa, avaricia et luxuria postergatis. Et quatro, optat et predicat nostra pars, quod militant ecclesia sincere secundum partes, quas ordinavit dominus, sit commixta, scilicet ex sacerdotibus Christi pure legem suam servantibus, ex mundo nobilibus ad observanciam ordinationis Christi compellentibus, ex vulgaribus utrique istarum parcium secundum legem Christi ministrantibus.' DE, 1958: pp. 148-149.

⁴⁰ 1966:63. Cf. Töpfer, 1995: p. 99; Molnár, 1985: p. 19.

not visible here and now. It is not a synonym of the church's 'victory' in terms of gaining power in this world. When Hus appeals to the highest authority of Christ, he does not necessarily expect that Christ's judgement will have to come through the Council's judgement, nor the opposite. But what he claims is that a Christian has a direct relation to Christ, which does not have to be, in a limit situation, mediated by anything else. This perspective can help us to understand this gesture of Hus, when being silenced by the church:⁴¹ 'I commit this my appeal to Jesus Christ, the most just judge, who reliably knows, defends and judges, makes visible and rewards the equitable cause of every man.'⁴² Christ's judgement concerns the ultimate reality, which, according to Hus the realist, belongs to God alone and cannot be 'created' by human beings. The extreme situation puts an end to any discussion over the problem of the right criteria for Christian belief and life. And Hus, similarly to Christians of the early period, when the church was persecuted, is left with the fact that following the *vita Christi* includes the possibility of martyrdom. The theme of mediation, however, also comes back into the picture: martyrdom, the strongest witness that our hope is in God and not in this world, mediates Christ's salvation to this world, even if the institutional supports fail.

3. Conclusion

In this concluding part I intend to bring together the summary of Hus's position, and in particular, the controversial points, and the issues I highlighted as the second task of this paper, namely placing Hus's case into the landscape of memories that have created opposing traditions. I will end by pointing out areas which need to complement historical research, so that the 'healing' and 'uniting', or even 'converting' of our memories may be possible on a larger scale.

3.1 Summary

Hus's teaching does not offer any completely new theme not found in earlier tradition. It is the choice of themes and the stress of the interpretation which provide sharp tools for reading the situation of his time.

The polarised opposition between the church and anti-church, the claim that heresy does not involve only teaching, but also practice, and thus

⁴¹ Hus wrote his final appeal to Christ in October 1412, when the pope pronounced an interdict on Prague until Hus left the city.

⁴² See *Husova výzbroj do Kostnice* [Hus's Equipment for Constance]. Eds. Dobíáš, Molnár, Kalich, (Prague, 1966), pp. 30, 32.

that Christians, including Christian leaders who do not live their faith, are 'heretics', and most of all, the challenge to the claim to be the highest authority of the church, whether following the papalist or the conciliarist scheme, all these issues placed Hus in the middle of a reform movement 'from below', which emphasised the active role of every Christian. These themes, however, also marked Hus as a dangerous influence on masses of people, and finally as a voice that needed to be silenced, so that the church reform 'from above' would be secured.

But this polarised opposition also destabilised the church's sacramental theology. In particular, by questioning the authority of the church and subjecting it to a moral judgment, it questioned its sacramental policy. Hus himself did not develop this theme, but opened the door to limiting the true church to a moral elite, a position which Augustine strongly opposed.

But if we want to recall Augustine's authority, it has to be added that in his controversy with the Donatists, where he challenges the claims to validity of someone's ministry being dependent on his moral qualities, Augustine also gives a starting point for a wider perspective on the church and on orthodoxy that stands in contrast to Cyprian's narrow understanding of the Catholic Church as the only means of salvation.⁴³ Augustine recognises ambiguities involved in belonging to the Catholic Church and says: 'But the Church, which is the people of God, is an ancient institution even in the pilgrimage of this life, having a carnal interest in some men, a spiritual interest in others.'⁴⁴ Augustine signals here his later views, that the Kingdom of God is not identical with the Catholic Church as an institution,⁴⁵ a view that contradicts the bull *Unam sanctam* on papal obedience being necessary for salvation.

In Hus the discernment on the church and her ministers is placed first in the light of eschatological clarity penetrating through our present stage of affairs, later in a more moderate form, that involves emptying oneself even from such clarity here and now.⁴⁶ When he deals with the questions of

⁴³ This position is illustrated by Cyprian's famous statement: 'Who has not the Church for mother can no longer have God for father.' *The Unity of the Catholic Church* (London: The Manresa Press, 1924:VI).

⁴⁴ Augustine, 1872:I/xv/24.

⁴⁵ Markus points out that 'as Augustine's thought in this sphere took shape, it lent itself less and less to interpretations in terms of a 'theology of the Constantinian (or Theodosian) establishment'.' (R. A. Markus, *Saeculum: History and Society in the Theology of St Augustine*. (London: Cambridge UP, 1970), p. 154). He ascribes Augustine's growing pessimism concerning Church-State relations to the judicial murder of his friend, Count Marcellinus, who had presided over the Catholic-Donatist Conference of Carthage in 411, in Africa (Cf.154, n.1).

⁴⁶ Here his position comes closer to Aquinas. Aquinas speaks of three qualities that are needed for passing judgment: authority to enforce the judgment, righteous zeal to motivate it with proper love of justice, and

what prevents the church from a Christ-like discipleship, he gives a general answer, disobedience to the divine law and not loving God.⁴⁷ And in the *Speech on Peace*, quoting Jn 21:15-17, he claims that such lack of love is destructive for the church, as the succession of Peter rests on love.⁴⁸ In his personal history, questions of determinism are not raised; rather, we see a gradual process in which the ultimate gains in importance, and finally is expressed in his martyrdom. In the latest writings, most of all in *On Peace*, Hus shows the need for theological reflection to be a permanently open, committed discourse, and, although he cannot defend his position at the Council, it becomes influential for his followers.

Hus's voice, similar to that of the folk preachers of the 12th and 13th century, which was close to the ideals of *Devotio Moderna*,⁴⁹ was marked by the Council as heterodox. And this fact blocked the acceptance of the more beneficial decrees of the Council by those who could not identify with this judgement. The polarised typology of Hus's writings was brought to life in 'judging' his case. Or rather, different polarised typologies, with the opposing meanings: Hus – heretic, the Council – the defender of orthodoxy; Hus – the type of Christ, the Council – the type of the Antichrist. These hermeneutical keys for reading the crisis of the church gave rise to oppositional traditions with their notions of 'glory' and with their wounded memories. In recent decades several attempts have been made to reevaluate the past, and to unite different histories into one. The official position of Rome has changed to appreciating Hus as 'a great reformer of the church', to an appreciation of 'the worthiness of his struggle for the liberty of conscience and for truth', and although to the disappointment of those who expected stronger rehabilitation, and maybe yet one more Slavic saint, the general line has significantly shifted from the position expressed at the Council of Constance. Hus has received 'the highest official approval even though some of his views on relatively minor matters are still not accepted without reservation by the Roman Catholic church.'⁵⁰

wisdom to formulate it. But he also holds that the final authority to judge belongs to Christ, but that the final judgement will be passed only when things cease to change and are completely finished. See *Summa theologiae* III.59.

⁴⁷ 'No one truly loves God, who does not keep his commandments.' Hus, DSC, 1985, p. 154.

⁴⁸ J. Hus, 1963, *Speech on Peace*, p. 57.

⁴⁹ See M. Gerwing, 'Takzvaná Devotio moderna' [So called Devotio Moderna], in HENC, pp. 54-59.

⁵⁰ See the official text of Pope John Paul II 'La figura storica di Jan Hus da punto di contesa può diventare un soggetto di dialogo, di confronto e approfondimento comune', *L'Osservatore Romano*, 18 (December 1999), 5; See also *Jan Hus ve Vatikánu: Mezinárodní rozprava o českém reformátoru 15. Století a o jeho recepci na prahu třetího tisíciletí*. [Jan Hus in the Vatican: An International Debate on the Czech Reformer of the 15th Century and on His Reception at the Dawn of the Third Millennium] Eds. J. Pánek and M. Polívka (Historický ústav, Praha, 2000), p. 151.

The pro-Hus and the anti-Hus traditional communities have done significant work in the field of history and theology, yet this work does not seem to have reached the majority of these communities in the country. Numerous Protestant, Hussite, or even Orthodox Christians now accuse the Catholics of wanting to steal Jan Hus from them. And yet a number of Catholic Christians have not ceased perceiving Hus as an unwanted heretic, and do not understand why their own representatives are leaving the 'well proved' position of Constance and stepping into dangerous waters in which the good Catholic faith may dissolve into Protestantism.

3.2 Role of Memory

Hus is a historical figure, but also a symbol, and as such has played a significant role in memories of different traditions. The historical figure gave rise to controversial interpretations. Hus the saint, Hus the heretic, etc.⁵¹ The symbolic figure developed these differences, and even brought new meanings, which the late Middle Ages did not know, such as Hus the liberator of the nation and a proponent of national identity,⁵² Hus the social reformer.⁵³ The historical figure of Hus and his struggle served here new purposes – to legitimate a different struggle, national or social or ideological.⁵⁴ But the different symbolic figures have also had their histories, and contributed to how the 'memory of Hus' was passed from one generation to another. Not only the Utraquists, the Taborites or the Moravian Brothers, and those who claim to be their descendants – the Orthodox and Roman Catholic Christians – perceive the figure of Hus as 'theirs', but also the national liberals or the proclaimers of social reform. In

⁵¹ See note 1.

⁵² See the interpretations of Palacký, in *Dějiny národu českého v Čechách a na Moravě* [History of the Czech Nation in Bohemia and in Moravia; five volumes; 1848-1876] Palacký was a historian of the National Revival Movement, and he offered the thesis that the Hussite times represent the peak of Czech national history. This theme was more popularly represented also by the dramas of J.K. Tyl, also a National Revival author, in particular by his *Jan Hus* (1848). Alois Jirásek, a writer of historical novels, which include works on the Hussite times: *Mezi proudy* [Between the streams; 1891]; *Proti všem* [Against everyone; 1894]; *Husitský král* [Hussite king; 1919-1930] then made this interpretation widespread, and although his works are mixtures of history and fiction, they became a normative interpretation both for the National Revival, which needed to distance itself from the Habsburgs, and also later for the communists, who wanted to emphasise the 'historical' distance of the Czech nation from Roman Catholicism.

⁵³ See the interpretations of Zdeněk Nejedlý, mainly in his monograph on Jirásek, which were taken up by the communist ideology, making of Hus a prototype Communist.

⁵⁴ See e.g. the criticisms of Hus as a national symbol in T.G. Masaryk, who states: 'a Czech reformer and a modern liberal, these are two mutually exclusive concepts. Our reformers surely struggled for the right to teach in the national language, they translated Scriptures into it for their people - however here the language was the natural means for religion and moral struggle, while for our liberal proclaimers religion was a means for language and for national unity.' *T.G. Masaryk a česká otázka* [T.G. Masaryk and the Czech Question] (Praha: Svoboda, 1990), p. 160. See also O.A. Funda, 'Masarykova interpretace Jana Husa' [Masaryk's Interpretation of Jan Hus], in HENC, pp. 300-304.

each instance the ‘memory of Hus’ can serve ideological purposes, keeping some group of people in power,⁵⁵ but it cannot eliminate the subversive power of memory – to open for the addressee a way to values and thoughts which the given interpretation suppressed. This memory, although it is always carried by a particular culture, involves also ‘unrealised possibilities’, that which is missing in that culture, which has been misinterpreted or forgotten.⁵⁶ Thus even the Hus saint, the Hus heretic, the Hus national or social reformer, can lead to questions concerning ‘which’ idea of sainthood or of heresy is legitimated by his case, ‘which’ concept of nation or of social order. The different ‘memories of Hus’ can reach back to the ‘history of Hus’, but also to the history of the constitutive symbols in different memories, and this is where most work still has to be done. It is here where we can learn about which certainties were given a higher place than others, and sometimes were safeguarded even against ‘facts’, which fears and which hopes were present in building up the images of Hus, in retelling his story. Indeed, we will come up against the distinction between iconic and idolic representations,⁵⁷ but even the idolatrous representations can provide us with questions as to why ‘this’ image or ‘this’ story was chosen, and we need to search as to whether there is not some authentic moment hidden in the misrepresentation. A sensitive, although critical, process of learning the language of conflicting symbols can help in extending the area of meaning, in widening what we consider to be based in something real in history, and in healing our relationships where the conflicting positions have inflicted wounds.

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⁵⁵ Compare to J.B. Thompson’s definition, where ideology is seen as ‘ways in which meaning serves to keeping the relations of power’. *Studies in the Theory of Ideology* (Cambridge: Polity Press, Oxford: Blackwells, 1984), p. 4.

⁵⁶ Compare to J.B. Metz’s concept of memory, which is ‘dangerous’, because it is rooted in God’s memory; *Faith in History and Society: Toward a Practical Fundamental Theology* (London: Burns & Oates, 1980) pp. 200-202.

⁵⁷ Compare to J.L. Marion’s distinction between the idol and the icon. The problem with the idol is this: ‘[it] places its centre of gravity in a human gaze; thus, dazzled as it may be by the brilliance of the divine, the gaze still remains in possession of the idol, its solitary master’; ‘in the icon, the visible is deepened infinitely in order to accompany, as one may say, each point of the invisible by a point of light. But visible and invisible thus coexist to infinity... The invisible of the icon consists of the intention of the face. The more the face becomes visible, the more the invisible intention whose gaze envisages us becomes visible. Better: the visibility of the face allows the invisibility that envisages to grow.’ *God Without Being* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1991) p. 20.

The Way or A Way?: The Scandal of Jesus Explored

Plurality or Pluralism?

According to the National Statistics Office in the United Kingdom, the name 'Mohammed' has risen on the 'most popular names for baby boys' list from number 34 in 1998 to number 20 for 2004.¹ Along the way, it has passed such traditional British names as Edward, Michael and Adam. While this statistic may seem insignificant to some, it actually signifies a very important shift in the United Kingdom. After waves of immigration in the 1950s and 1960s that brought immigrants of all persuasions of faith to the British Isles, we see that these individuals have rooted in society, and are giving birth to a new generation of Britons. On a socio-political level, this diversity is to be welcomed as the nation's culture is enriched by encounters with the world beyond its shores. On the theological level, in the life of faith communities, this diversity is also welcomed as it presents a challenge to our understandings of faith and our expression of Christianity. This shift forces us to move beyond positions of complacency to make sense of this plurality that has landed on our doorstep.

As individuals and communities, from the perspective of a Christian faith commitment, have sought to 'make sense' of this plurality, a number of approaches have emerged. Some have rejected the notion that there is any truth outside of Christianity, adopting an exclusivist position. This position is most famously expressed in the pre-Vatican II Roman Catholic stance of *extra ecclesiam nulla salus* – outside the church there is no salvation – but is more common in some conservative evangelical circles today. The exclusivist allows no room for the salvation of humanity outside the Christian tradition and limits salvation to those with an explicit knowledge of Jesus Christ. As we examine the global scene, nearly two-thirds of the world's population are adherents of a faith tradition other than Christianity,² so, therefore, according to this position, excluded from the grace of God. For many, including me, this position is not compatible with their understanding of a God of grace who desires for all to come to a saving knowledge of him.³ Therefore, others have adopted a more accommodating position, namely that of pluralism. This position,

¹ www.babycentre.co.uk/babynamer.

² http://www.adherents.com/Religions_By_Adherents.html, accessed 31 March 2005.

³ 1 Timothy 2:4 states, '(God) desires everyone to be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth.' (NRSV).

popularised by John Hick, a former university professor in Birmingham and minister of the United Reformed Church, seeks to erase particularities from the major religious traditions of the world. Instead, Hick and other pluralists like him look to find the common goal of religion, namely that of centring one's life on the divine Reality. This soteriocentric approach, moving from a 'self-centredness to a Reality-centredness',⁴ creates no space for those aspects of a tradition that suggest particularity, exclusivity or superiority. For many, including me, this argument is equally flawed. Written from the perspective of a Christian faith commitment, it fails to consider equally the perspective of other religious traditions, nor does it offer them room to speak. Nor does it fully take into account the strength of religious particularities as foundational to the respective traditions and the force with which these beliefs are held.

There is a third way, a middle road between these two positions. This position, the inclusivist, has been advocated by theologians such as Karl Rahner and Hans Küng. It seeks to mediate between exclusivism and pluralism, recognising the particularities of the traditions while holding open the possibility of the grace of God beyond the Christian tradition and an explicit knowledge of Jesus Christ. From a Christian perspective, particularity is a contentious issue as it relates to the God-Man, Jesus Christ. However, we cannot, with integrity, ignore or circumvent the issues particularity presents. As Pamela Dickey Young highlights, 'if religious traditions make no claims to truth beyond themselves they become trivial. As merely innocuous expressions of one point of view alongside another, they would carry no power or depth to invite or command participation.'⁵ It is quite clear from Jesus' words in the Gospels that he invites us to participate in this story.⁶ Therefore, we must engage in the inevitable discussion of the identity and role of Jesus within the Christian tradition in order to understand Christianity's place amongst the world religions.

These three highly philosophical approaches of exclusivism, inclusivism and pluralism have been the traditional means by which Christians have sought to understand their world of competing claims of truth and the place of Jesus Christ amongst them. However, Thomas Thangaraj, an Indian theologian and minister in the church of South India,

⁴ John Hick, 'Religious Pluralism', in *Philosophy of Religion: Selected Readings*, ed. Michael Peterson et al. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), p. 561.

⁵ Pamela Dickey Young, *Christ in a Post-Christian World: How Can We Believe in Jesus Christ When Those around Us Believe Differently - or Not at All?* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), p. 63.

⁶ Jesus' call to his disciples was 'follow me' in Matthew 8-9, Mark 2, and Luke 5. This is the call to disciples of all generations as Jesus 'invites us not to repeat his history but to make it our own'. Lamberto Schuurman, 'Christology in Latin America' in Bonino, *Faces of Jesus* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1984), p. 181.

suggests that ‘we now find ourselves in a situation where these categories are no longer helpful; we need to press on to other ways of talking about the uniqueness and finality of Christ’.⁷ This call for a shift of approach to defining the uniqueness of Jesus is echoed by Latin American theologian, Orlando Costas, who has been strongly influenced by the liberation theology movement. In his argument for the Lordship of Christ from the perspective of a radical evangelical, Costas asserts that, in order to understand the nature of religious discourse and purpose, we must move away from examining the ideological role of religion to its praxial role.⁸ He argues that the validity test for any religious tradition is not in its ‘soteriological efficacy’,⁹ as Hick and other pluralists suggest, but the extent to which it is a change agent, bringing signs of a new humanity.¹⁰ Costas claims that the respective religious traditions, Christianity included, ‘can mediate God’s presence in history only insofar as they are signs and instruments of God’s coming kingdom’.¹¹ While it has not been without its critics, ‘the idea of orthopraxis has caught the attention of theologians all around the world’¹² and has significantly altered how we approach the ‘historical’ Jesus. This pragmatic approach allows us to examine the life and death of Jesus Christ in order to ascertain whether or not the distinctiveness that characterised these events warrant Jesus the privileged status he enjoys within the Christian tradition. And, if uniqueness can be ascribed to Jesus, what does this mean for other religious traditions?

Objections to the Exclusivity of Jesus

The ‘scandal of particularity’ of the historical Christ event is problematic for those who desire to make space for all religious traditions in the economy of God. The objections to the Christian claim for the exclusivity and privileged status of Jesus Christ are many and varied, and they stem from a variety of critics. We will not look at these exhaustively as this is beyond the scope of this article, but we will briefly mention a couple of the more vocal critiques. Leslie Newbigin presents the concerns of some critics who state that ‘we have no right in a pluralist, diverse society to say that there is no other name given under heaven by which we are saved. The

⁷ M. Thomas Thangaraj, *The Crucified Guru: An Experiment in Cross-Cultural Christology* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994), p. 32.

⁸ Orlando Costas, ‘A Radical Evangelical Contribution from Latin America’ in *Christ’s Lordship and Religious Pluralism*, ed. Gerald H. Anderson and Thomas F Stransky (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1981), p. 156. Costas also refers to these roles as superstructural versus infrastructural.

⁹ Hick, p. 561.

¹⁰ Costas, p. 152.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 150.

¹² Thangaraj, p. 29.

empirical situation flatly contradicts such a claim. Modern historical consciousness must disallow Christian claims to uniqueness.¹³ Western Christianity, in particular, is singled out as a target for those who desire to deny the uniqueness of Christ. With its imperial and colonial history, claims for the exclusivity of Jesus are seen as just another example of its hegemonic tendencies and superior attitudes in the face of competition.

Others object on different grounds. As Jesus was a first century Jewish male, it could be argued that he can be significant only for other first century Jewish males, as some feminists purport. Post-Christian feminist Daphne Hampson certainly finds the particularity of Jesus problematic. In orthodox Christology, the divine is bound to the human in the person of Jesus Christ. That humanity is expressedly male, which, according to Hampson, separates the divine from the experience of the feminine. Therefore, Jesus is rendered incompatible with feminist ideals and must not be given privileged status.¹⁴ Thus, the particularity of Jesus is scandalous and this prohibits many from embracing Christianity wholly. However, here we look to explore the 'scandal of particularity' and uncover if it is precisely this particularity that suggests universality.

The Jesus Scandal

It would be impossible for Christian apologists to address all of the objections related to the exclusivity of Jesus Christ. Nevertheless, Christians, from the perspective of their own faith commitment, must grapple with this plurality of faiths and the exclusive claims to truth that Christianity presents, namely that of Jesus Christ as the God-man who walked the earth for the salvation of humankind. Therefore, what Christology are we to profess that simultaneously remains faithful to Christian tradition while acknowledging the presence of God's grace within the plurality of other faith traditions? Nigel Wright, in his book, *The Radical Evangelical*, concludes that 'one way of solving the problem of religious pluralism is indeed to water down the specificity of Christ. But to those who take the more radical risk, Christ becomes both wisdom and power.'¹⁵ As we have noted, there are many who choose the former path of reducing the significance of Christ, arguing for a Christology 'from below', privileging the humanity of Jesus while underplaying, or even denying, the

¹³ L Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society* (London: SPCK, 1989), p. 156.

¹⁴ Daphne Hampson, 'Feminism and Christology', in *Feminism and Theology*, ed. Janet Martin Soskice and Diana Lipton (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 287.

¹⁵ N Wright, *The Radical Evangelical* (London: SPCK, 1996), p. 27.

divinity of Jesus.¹⁶ This approach certainly eliminates many of the aforementioned objections and creates space for ‘creative interpretation’ of the identity and role of Jesus. In this argument, however, we hope to take the ‘more radical risk’ that Wright suggests. Like those who wish to deny the divinity of Jesus, we will also employ a ‘low’ Christology, carefully examining the life and death of Jesus as a historical event. Though the methodology is similar, our conclusion will seek to demonstrate not only the divinity of Jesus, but his unique position as universal Saviour. We will look at three aspects of Jesus – his life, death, and resurrection – in order to satisfy Costas’ test for validity that searches for ‘signs and instruments of God’s coming kingdom’.¹⁷

The life – Jesus, herald of the Kingdom of God

The question that inevitably arises in any discussion of the life and death of Jesus of Nazareth is how this event, which was located in a particular time and space, can have universal significance for all time and all spaces. According to Costas, ‘the life and ministry of Jesus tells us that socio-historical particularity has universal significance when it points beyond itself to a future and transcendent reality’.¹⁸ This future and transcendent reality is the coming kingdom of God. Stanley Grenz also argues for Jesus’ universal significance using the biblical narrative, particularly drawing on Colossians 1:16-17 ‘...in him all things hold together’. Grenz asserts that ‘as the Christ, Jesus’ role in creation is cosmic in extent, for he is the one in whom all things find their center. ... Consequently, through connection with Jesus, humans – and the entire cosmos – come to participate in God’s new creation.’¹⁹ He also affirms this eschatological reality, the Kingdom of God, as significant for declaring the universality of Jesus’ life, death and resurrection. Though recognising Jesus as only one possible salvific factor, Jacques Dupuis, arguing from a distinctly Roman Catholic perspective, admits there was a definite uniqueness to the work of Christ on earth as he announced the coming kingdom.

The ‘gospel’ values which Jesus upholds, the Kingdom of God which he announces, the human project or ‘program’ which he puts

¹⁶ Stanley Samartha is one scholar who champions this method. For a more thorough discussion of Samartha’s Christology, see Stanley Samartha, ‘The Lordship of Jesus Christ and Religious Pluralism’, in *Christ’s Lordship and Religious Pluralism*, ed. Gerald H. Anderson and Thomas F Stransky (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1981).

¹⁷ Costas, p. 150.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 136.

¹⁹ Stanley Grenz, ‘The Universality of the “Jesus-Story” and the “Incredulity toward Metanarratives”’, in *No Other Gods before Me: Evangelicals and the Challenge of World Religions*, ed. John G Stackhouse, Jr (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001), p. 101.

forward, his option for the poor and the marginalized, his denouncing of injustice, his message of universal love: all these, no doubt, contribute to the difference and specificity of Jesus' personality.²⁰

It is exactly the specificity of Jesus as he ushers in the new kingdom for all creation that allows his universality. Costas goes on to assert that 'when christological universality is divorced from the particularity of Jesus, then the confessing community is unable to find christological images that correspond to its particular reality and Christ's universality ends up lost in a reservoir of vagueness'.²¹ However, if we hold to the image of Christ portrayed in the gospels, shown through Jesus' words and deeds, and embodied in his incarnational presence, we see the 'vehicles of God's transforming power and signs of his coming kingdom'.²²

The death – Jesus, the Suffering Servant

While the first century Jews searched for a coming Messiah who would wield political power, military might, and religious authority, a small band of social misfits looked to a simple man, Jesus of Nazareth, as the promise of God to all creation. He was certainly an unlikely saviour – poor and uneducated, with no hope of garnering political or military power. I would like to suggest that it is precisely because of his lack of these traditional forms of power that Jesus becomes the ideal candidate for the Saviour of the world. Costas expresses a similar sentiment stating,

the uniqueness of Jesus lies not in his conquering power and might but in his love and service. This is uniquely expressed in his suffering death. Jesus Christ is a unique Lord because he has identified himself forever with suffering humanity, standing in solidarity with men and women at the lowest form of their existence: poverty and oppression.²³

Thomsen echoes this position as he asserts that 'the uniqueness and Lordship of Jesus Christ has nothing to do with imperial, economic, political or military power. It is precisely the opposite.'²⁴ Jesus' power was not of the traditional form, as was alluded to by Nigel Wright earlier.

²⁰ Jacques Dupuis, *Christianity and the Religions: From Confrontation to Dialogue* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2001), pp. 157-158.

²¹ Costas, p. 136.

²² Ibid., p. 138.

²³ Ibid., p. 148.

²⁴ Mark Thomsen, 'Confessing Jesus Christ within the World of Religious Pluralism', *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 14, no. 3 (July 1990).

It is the cross event, however, that is paramount to an understanding of Jesus as the suffering servant. As Costas asserts, 'the cross of Jesus underscores the dissimilarity between the Lordship of Christ and the lords of this world'.²⁵ In a paradox that can only be described in light of an upside-down kingdom, the suffering of Jesus privileges him above all other lords and gods. For it is in Jesus' suffering that the cross is situated 'on the side of the poor and the afflicted, the sick and the oppressed'²⁶ and as Thomsen asserts, the suffering of Christ 'manifests God's participation in the suffering of the broken human community'.²⁷ Through Jesus' identification with those who suffer and are oppressed, he becomes one of them, erasing all accusations of imperialism and hegemony. Nigel Wright is quick to point out, quite rightly, that 'a justified criticism of historic Christianity is that it has often so accommodated itself to the wealthy and powerful in human societies as to become a legitimating ideology for the powerful'.²⁸ However, this, unfortunately, is a distortion of the expression of power by Jesus on the cross. The cross event is first a liberating act of Jesus on behalf of a fallen, broken humanity. Regardless of one's theology of the atonement, the cross remains central to an understanding of God connecting with humanity, reconciling the divine with the created order. The argument of 'Jesus as the suffering servant' seems an unlikely argument to employ when discerning the exclusivity and privilege of Christ. However, perhaps Colin Gunton articulates it best when he states: 'that our lives should be measured and healed by this lonely and suffering figure is the real reason why the ascription of uniqueness is difficult, but it is also the reason why it should be made'.²⁹

The resurrection – Jesus, the risen Christ

Costas argues that 'if the uniqueness of Jesus lies in the fact that he is the crucified Lord, his universality rests on the saving significance of his resurrection'.³⁰ As we examine the life and ministry of Jesus, it is impossible to detach this Jesus from the 'post-Easter Jesus', as Marcus Borg calls him.³¹ The resurrection signalled the power of Jesus over eternal death and Ramachandra argues that 'it is only in the light of this conviction of a once-for-all, public defeat of death and evil that we can affirm the

²⁵ Costas, p. 141.

²⁶ Ibid., p. 141.

²⁷ Thomsen.

²⁸ Wright, p. 22.

²⁹ Colin Gunton, *Yesterday and Today: A Study of Continuities in Christology* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1983), p. 165.

³⁰ Costas, p. 149.

³¹ N.T. Wright and Marcus Borg, *The Meaning of Jesus: Two Visions* (London: SPCK, 1999), p. 7.

abiding worth of other histories and individual human stories'.³² It holds significance for all that went before, all that is present, and all that is yet to come, in every time and space. The kingdom of God is no longer limited to temporality but abides in every age and place. The universality of the kingdom of God is expressed in the post-resurrection Christ.

Borg goes on to assert that 'the post-Easter Jesus is an experiential reality not simply an article of belief'.³³ This is the Jesus, who after death, became the Jesus of the Christian tradition and experience. This is the Jesus we experience in the present age through the Spirit. The risen Christ, through the fullness of the relationship of the Trinity, is experienced in the world today. Jacques Dupuis argues that an understanding of what he terms a 'Trinitarian Christology'³⁴ is crucial in making the case for Christian universality in a world of plurality of faiths. This Trinitarian Christology allows for the work of the Spirit of Christ beyond the Church and in ways unseen and unknown to the Church. Dupuis argues that 'the historical centrality of the Christ event cannot be allowed to obscure the Trinitarian rhythm of the divine economy' and the 'universal presence and action of the Spirit in human history and in the world'³⁵ must be affirmed. Therefore, those with no explicit knowledge of the Christ event are not excluded from experiencing the liberation that proceeds from Jesus' life, death and resurrection.

Missiological Implications

It is the task of the Church to remain faithful and bear witness to that particularity that it holds above all things, the uniqueness and finality of Jesus Christ for all humanity. As we have discovered, this is not a welcome message in a world full of competing particularities. The question then remains, as Ramachandra expresses it, 'can we live in a pluralistic environment and continue to make universal truth-claims, while still respecting the diversity of human cultures and religious beliefs?'³⁶ However, in light of the words and deeds of Jesus that we have examined carefully in this essay, perhaps this is the wrong question. C. S. Song advocates a gospel of love rather than truth. In Song's analysis, truth divides and polarises and 'truth cannot unite the ununitable; only love can.

³² Vinoth Ramachandra, *Faiths in Conflict?* (Leicester: IVP, 1999), p. 130.

³³ Wright and Borg, *The Meaning of Jesus*, p. 7.

³⁴ Dupuis, p. 90.

³⁵ Ibid., pp. 94 and 92, respectively.

³⁶ Ramachandra, p. 119.

So the Christian mission must be an affair of love, not an affair of truth.’³⁷ Instead of engaging in apologetic arguments in a quest for absolute truth, perhaps the Church should concentrate its efforts in re-telling the gospel story, a story of love.

Telling the Story

In recent years, inter-religious dialogue has come to the forefront of Christian engagement with other religious traditions, formally and informally. As we dialogue with those of other faith commitments, we seek to share common concerns and issues, particularly related to our communities, our world, and the struggles we experience as people of faith. We also seek to share something of our own faith tradition to enrich, encourage and perhaps even challenge one another. In this encounter, all participants are changed and transformed through the stories of one another. As we seek to bear witness to the faith that we profess in these opportunities for dialogue, Newbigin asserts that ‘the essential contribution of the Christian to the dialogue will simply be the telling of the story, the story of Jesus, the story of the Bible’.³⁸ For, in telling the story, we tell something of our own journey of faith and understanding of truth, but most of all, we communicate love not dogma.

However, there are those who would suggest that the story of Jesus will not communicate in a post-modern world that, as Jean-François Lyotard asserts, is characterised by an ‘incredulity towards meta-narratives’.³⁹ However, Stanley Grenz, a post-modern thinker himself, firmly disagrees. He states that, ‘at first glance, the postmodern incredulity toward metanarratives and the evangelical missiological impulse appear to be so incommensurate and antithetical as to preclude any kind of fruitful engagement’⁴⁰ but the ‘theocentric character of the Jesus-story provides the key to affirming its universality in the midst of the contemporary incredulity toward metanarratives’.⁴¹ Ramachandra takes a similar position in asserting that the Christian story is unlike the ‘totalising metanarratives of modernity’.⁴² Its difference is in the nature of the story. The story of

³⁷ C.S. Song, *Tell Us Our Names* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1984), p. 114, as quoted in Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society*, p. 183.

³⁸ Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society*, p. 182.

³⁹ Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, trans. Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi, *Theory and History of Literature*, vol. 10 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), p. xxiv.

⁴⁰ Grenz, ‘The Universality of the “Jesus-Story” and the “Incredulity toward Metanarratives”’, p. 102.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 87.

⁴² Vinoth Ramachandra, ‘The Universality of Christ’, in *Grace and Truth in the Secular Age*, ed. Timothy Bradshaw (Cambridge: Eerdmans, 1998), p. 275.

Jesus as found in the gospels is not one of consistent victory and triumph, as we have noted, but one of pain and suffering. The gospel story leaves us with as many questions as answers, and as many uncertainties as certainties. Yet, these characteristics do not diminish its worth, but enhance its ability to communicate to a generation of postmodern thinkers, for whom absolutes are not readily embraced.

Grenz goes on to explain that ‘at the heart of this postmodern outlook is the assumption that the world consists of a variety of cultural communities, each of which has its own set of narratives that provides the basis for a unique understanding of the cosmos and of life within the cosmos’.⁴³ However, this does not have to suggest that narratives cannot transcend their own cultural trappings and become embedded in another culture. One of the strengths of current theological scholarship is the contribution from third world theologians and other non-Western theologians who share the story of Jesus from traditionally non-Christian cultures.⁴⁴ We are able to see something of the universality of the Church and the ability of the gospel narrative to move beyond the borders that Western Christianity has historically drawn in terms of academic scholarship and Christian expression. Therefore, in telling the story of Jesus, we must be willing to listen to this story communicated in a variety of cultural forms.

Living the Story

As the writer of the letter of James tells us, ‘so faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead’.⁴⁵ It is no longer enough to simply recount the Jesus story, unless it is embodied in the life of the Christian community. In his book, *Telling the Story*, Andrew Walker implores the Church to live the gospel that it speaks, stating,

This is a reminder to us that the Story is not a set of prepositional truths, or a manual of systematic theology. It is the story of Christ, that, once written on our hearts, shows us how we should treat each other, how to live together, how to become persons. Ultimately, if we cannot demonstrate the proof of our story by living it, we will never convince people of its truth by talking about it.⁴⁶

However, living the story of Jesus is not always an easy task. As we have seen, the story of Jesus is full of struggle, pain and suffering. This

⁴³ Grenz, ‘The Universality of the “Jesus-Story” and the “Incredulity toward Metanarratives”’, p. 85.

⁴⁴ For example, see the aforementioned book by M. Thomas Thangaraj that compares Jesus to an Indian guru in order to communicate the story of Christ to the Tamil of South India.

⁴⁵ James 2:17, (NRSV).

⁴⁶ A. Walker, *Telling the Story: Gospel, Mission, and Culture* (London: SPCK, 1996), p. 201

story identifies with the most marginal of peoples, the poor and oppressed. Mark Thomsen, an Evangelical Lutheran missionary to Nigeria for many years, goes so far as to assert that ‘any attempt to communicate the Gospel from a distance while avoiding participation in the pain and tragedy of human brokenness is a denial of the Lordship of Jesus’.⁴⁷ Therefore, as communities of the kingdom, we have both to tell the story and participate in it, always pointing towards the vision of the eschatological kingdom that characterised Jesus’ life and ministry.

In this post-modern generation, the story that is demonstrated as well as told will gain a more attentive audience. Thomsen addresses the postmodern challenge of culturally defined narratives, of which Grenz spoke earlier. Thomsen suggests that as the community of faith

follows Jesus into the depths of human pain, it participates in the struggle for universal justice and is molded by the crucified mind of Christ, then it witnesses authentically to Jesus. Then the church authentically begins to speak of that one who transcends cultural relativism and who is the norm for all the manifestations of the Holy within the cosmos.⁴⁸

The life of Jesus becomes normative for the Christian community and the standard by which faith and practice are measured. In so doing, the community witnesses to the story it professes.

Conclusion

In this globalised, postmodern age, the Church faces a difficult task as it seeks to express the distinctiveness of Jesus Christ amongst the plurality of religious beliefs and traditions that co-exist in Western and non-Western cultures alike. Employing an argument from the perspective of orthopraxis, rather than orthodoxy, we have looked at one way of demonstrating the uniqueness of Christ as the herald of the kingdom of God, the suffering servant, and the risen Lord. We have left open the possibility of the Spirit of Christ at work in ways we cannot see or understand, bringing liberation from powers of oppression and injustice. As communities of this new kingdom that Jesus ushered in, we have a responsibility to be faithful to the calling of discipleship and bear witness to this transforming story, both through our recounting of the story and the way we continue to live the story. Stanley Grenz perhaps summed up the role of the community of believers best, stating ‘the task of the Christian community is to articulate

⁴⁷ Thomsen.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

the transcendent vision of God's eschatological new creation and to embody that vision, which they believe is nothing less than God's intention for all humankind.⁴⁹

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⁴⁹ Grenz, 'The Universality of the "Jesus-Story" and the "Incredulity toward Metanarratives"', p. 102.

Baptist mission in Poland in the 19th century as an example of contextualisation

Introduction

Then Jesus came to them and said, All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.¹

These famous words of Jesus have always had a very inspirational influence on Christians. Wherever people have taken them seriously, the wind of change has blown over old customs and traditions, bringing new ways of worshipping God and serving him with devotion and creativity.

They, together with other texts from the Scriptures, laid the foundation for missionary activity in the course of the history of the Christian Church. Whenever Christians remembered them, they brought revival; whenever they were forgotten, the Church lost her vigour and deteriorated.

Yet, because they were part of a message spoken in a particular context, they have had to be translated again and again, so they could effectively influence people in different times and places. This has been a lofty task for any missionary church, and for anyone who has been sent by the church to accomplish it.

In the last two thousand years, missionaries and theologians have been struggling with the issue of contextualisation, of sharing the Good News in such a way that people would be able to understand it and accept it as a truly alternative way of life for them individually and for their societies. Some attempts were more or less successful, some failed miserably, but the struggle itself is still present in all missionary endeavours.

In this paper, I would like to look at the work of one missionary church, the Baptist Church, that in the 19th century influenced one part of Europe, namely Poland. The history of the Baptist Church in Poland is rich in events, but this work will concentrate mainly on the theme of

¹ Mat 28:18-20 (NIV)

contextualisation, and analyse the way Baptist missionaries introduced the Gospel to the people in this land.

First, I will present a short history of the Baptist mission in Poland in the 19th century² by addressing the issues of the political and religious situations in that country. After this very brief discussion, I will look at the subject of contextualisation, present some current definitions, and after that I will proceed to a critical evaluation of its implementation in Poland.

In the conclusion, I will try to draw some lessons from the history described in this paper and make some general observations about the present situation in Poland.

1. A short history of Baptist mission in Poland in the 19th century³

Let us start by looking at the political situation in Poland in the 19th century, in itself a very broad and interesting subject, which has stimulated many authors to write thick volumes that fill many library shelves. Regretfully, in this paper I have to confine myself to a very general description of the situation in this part of Europe.

First of all, it needs to be stated that in the 19th century no such national body as Poland existed. 'Poland' entered that century as an area partitioned between Russia, Prussia and Austria. For a short period, as a reward for backing Napoleon's war with Russia, a small territory, with its centre in Warsaw, gained independence as the Duchy of Warsaw. Yet, as the result of the defeat of Napoleon, it ended its existence in 1812.

In 1815, the Congress of Vienna established the Kingdom of Poland, commonly known as Congress Poland (Kongresowka). The territory was given some measure of independence, though it was strongly dominated by Russia. In the 19th century, several rebellions occurred, with the last defeated by the Russians in 1863. At this time, Russia clamped down hard on the Poles, insisting on Russian as the official language and effectively removing the Polish nobility from any power they may have had.

Therefore, for more than a century Poles found themselves ruled by three different governments: Russian czars, the Habsburg dynasty from

² In this article I rely on the history of Baptist mission in Poland in the 19th century as presented by Krzysztof Bednarczyk in his book 'Historia Zborow Baptystycznych w Polsce do 1939 roku' ['The History of the Baptist Churches in Poland until 1939']. There is not much material available on this subject in the Polish language, and his work is among the most extensive and exhaustive ones.

³ For this discussion of Polish history in the 19th century I have used the outline presented on the Internet site, <http://www.genealogienetz.de/reg/ESE/poland.html> accessed on 15 April 2004.

Austria, and the Prussian kings. These three parts of the country differed, not only in terms of the ruling authorities, but also the fact that there were very important differences in the levels of religious and national tolerance and economic development. All of this had an enormous influence on Baptist missionary activity and the growth and development of Baptist churches.

This activity was also influenced substantially by the religious situation in Poland at that time. We have to remember that after the Peace of Westphalia in 1648, with its promulgation of the famous rule *cuius regio eius religio* (freely translated, 'each region has to follow the religion of its ruler'⁴), Europe was divided between three major branches of the Christian religion: Roman Catholicism, Protestantism and Orthodoxy. All three of them were present within the borders of former Poland, with Roman Catholic supremacy in Austria, the Orthodox Church in Russia and Protestantism in Prussia (later Germany).⁵ Because the Orthodox Church was influenced by the Baptist missionary movement in a rather insignificant way, I will confine these reflections only to Protestantism and Roman Catholicism.

Let us start our discussion considering Roman Catholics and their religiosity. Poland had accepted Christianity in its Western Catholic version in the 10th century and successfully resisted the changes introduced during the Reformation. This successful resistance was partially due to the growth and spread of the Jesuit Order on Polish soil. Having a very strong influence on the educational system in the country, the Jesuits were able to create in Poland in the 17th and 18th centuries a special type of Catholic. According to K. Bednarczyk, the author of 'Historia Zborow Baptystycznych w Polsce do 1939 roku' ('The History of the Baptist Churches in Poland until 1939') a typical Catholic was 'intolerant, suspicious of the use of the Holy Scripture and independent religious reflection, fond of church tradition and almost subconsciously hostile to everything Lutheran or Reformed'.⁶

Yet, after the partition, it was the Catholic religion that became a cementing factor for Poles in different parts of the country. Again, in the words of the same author, in the 19th century a notion was formed, that 'to be a Pole meant to be a Catholic'. According to another Baptist writer, J. H.

⁴ David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission. Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1999), p. 241.

⁵ Krzysztof Bednarczyk, *Historia Zborow Baptystycznych w Polsce do 1939 roku* (Warszawa: Słowo Prawdy, 1997), pp. 11-20.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 12, (translation mine).

Rushbrooke, in Poland at that time there was a widespread idea ‘that national loyalty and Roman Catholicism belonged together and that to become a Protestant was to cease to be a good Pole’.⁷

The situation was different with the Protestants, as they had always been in a minority in the country. We have to remember that although the Reformation reached Poland in the 16th century, it did not survive throughout the whole country and its remnants in the 19th century could be found only in parts of Silesia (in Austria) and Eastern Prussia (in Prussia).

Yet the partition of Poland changed this situation. Due to numerous migrations from Germany and the Netherlands into the Russian part, with its Orthodox Church as the State Church, there were hundreds of thousands of Protestants, mostly craftsmen, and factory workers.⁸ In Prussia, which annexed the western part of Poland, the Protestant Church was the State Church, so the Polish Catholics were repressed and under-privileged, with almost the opposite situation in Galicia (in the Austrian part).

The Protestants at that time were under a very strong influence of rationalism and, according to one Polish writer, the sermons preached in the church lacked any religious depth and led to religious indifference on the part of church members.⁹ Not all was so dark, though; there were Pietistic groups in the Protestant Church, there were Moravians, Mennonites and other smaller groups of believers who were hungry for God and a personal relationship with him, ready to open the Bible and search for the truth that could speak to their hearts.

Such was the general background of the first wave of Baptist mission that came to the country in the 19th century mostly from Germany (the second wave consists of modern Baptist missionary work predominantly from the USA).

It is impossible to write about Baptist missionary work in Poland without mentioning the name of a certain German, Johann Gerhard Oncken, whose missionary influence was, according to Dean R. Kirkwood, ‘like a pebble dropped into still water, with the ripples spreading in ever-widening circles’.¹⁰ In 1833, during one of his many trips, Oncken visited

⁷ J. H. Rushbrooke, *The Baptist Movement on the Continent of Europe*, (London: The Kingsgate Press, 1923), p. 66.

⁸ Henryk Krzysztof Tomaszewski, *Baptysci w Polsce w latach 1858-1918 [Baptists in Poland in the years 1858-1918]* (Warszawa: Slovo i Zycie, 1993), p.15.

⁹ Woldemar Gastpary, *Historia Protestantyzmu w Polsce od polowy XVII w. do I wojny swiatowej [Protestant History in Poland from the middle of the 17th century to the First World War]* (Warszawa, 1977), p. 130.

¹⁰ Dean R. Kirkwood, ed., *European Baptists: a Magnificent Minority* (Valley Forge: International Ministries, 1981), p. 17.

the Mennonite church in Elbląg, and, as a result of this trip, in 1844, one of the first Baptist churches on Polish soil (in the Prussian part) came into existence. Soon other towns and cities in the Polish part of Prussia followed the lead and, by 1855, there were nine Baptist churches.¹¹ The majority of new converts belonged to Bible circles from the Protestant Church or to Mennonite fellowships, but there were a few who came to faith from the Roman Catholic Church. The Gospel was shared by missionaries mainly in the German language, and this single factor was a great obstacle to its acceptance by Poles.

In Congress Poland (the Russian part), the story had started with a village teacher, Godfryd Frederic Alf¹². Alongside his teaching activities, he was also involved in the Bible circle in the Protestant Church in Adamów. After some contacts with the Baptist believers from Prussia, Alf, together with his friends, became convinced that Baptist teaching was the right one and, in 1858, they were baptised by some missionaries from Prussia. The new church (officially founded in 1861) was missionary minded and, because of its work, the Good News spread through the neighbourhood. As a result of Baptist missionary activity in Congress Poland, by 1878, six Baptist churches were formed in different towns and cities.¹³ Again, as in the Prussian part, the majority of converts belonged to German immigrants or to German-speaking Polish members of the Protestant Church. There were a few Polish Catholics, but the majority stubbornly resisted the new teaching.

In Galicia (the Austrian part), there was almost no missionary activity, although one small church came into existence in 1881 as a result of a short visit of one German Baptist from Romania. Here also the believers were Germans from a small German colony.¹⁴

Even from this short and very sketchy outline, we can see that Baptist missionary work in Poland in the 19th century was conducted predominantly in German and spread mostly among the German immigrants in Polish parts of Prussia and Russia. There were some missionaries who were actively involved in the mission to Poles and who

¹¹ Bednarczyk, *Historia Zborów Baptystycznych w Polsce do 1939 roku*, p. 63.

¹² His life and role is presented in such materials as: Bednarczyk, *Historia Zborów Baptystycznych w Polsce do 1939 roku*; Tomaszewski, *Baptysci w Polsce w latach 1858-1918*; Albert W Wardin Jr., *Gottfried F. Alf – A Pioneer of the Baptist Movement in Poland* [*Gotfryd Fryderyk Alf – pionier ruchu baptystycznego na ziemiach polskich*], (Warszawa: Wyższe Baptystyczne Seminarium Teologiczne), 2003.

¹³ Cf. Bednarczyk, *Historia Zborów Baptystycznych w Polsce do 1939 roku*, Tomaszewski, *Baptysci w Polsce w latach 1858-1918*, or Wardin, p. 63.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 137.

spoke Polish, yet because ‘the Baptist message was carried initially by citizens from countries which ruled Poland’¹⁵ and because of the nature of Polish Catholicism, the results were not impressive.

2. The issue of contextualisation

Of course, in any missionary activity, people face the issue of the relationship between the culture and the Good News. Christians have struggled with this issue since the very beginning of their practical realisation of the ‘Great Commission’ and at different times suggested different answers. If previously they talked about accommodation or indigenisation, today the ‘buzz’ word is contextualisation.

David J. Hesselgrave and Edward Rommen in their book ‘Contextualization. Meanings, Methods, and Models’ write about this new idea. They say, ‘[a] new word was needed to denote the ways in which we adjust messages to cultural contexts and go about the doing of theology itself. That new word is contextualization.’¹⁶

To talk about contextualisation is to touch on a very complex and broad subject. The meaning of the idea encompasses such areas as culture, communication, and even theology itself. Because the term is quite a recent newcomer on the missiological scene, its interpretation is not free from some misunderstandings.

One of the new definitions of contextualisation is presented by Dean Gilliland, a professor at Fuller Theological Seminary, who says:

Contextualization is the dynamic reflection carried out by the particular church upon its own life in light of the Word of God and historic Christian truth. Guided by the Holy Spirit, the church continually challenges, incorporates and transforms elements of the cultural milieu, bringing these under the Lordship of Christ. As members of the Body of Christ interpret the Word, using their own thoughts and employing their own cultural gifts, they are better able to understand the gospel as incarnation.¹⁷

A somewhat different description of the same phenomenon can be seen in Catholic circles. Steven B. Bevans, writing about evangelisation as

¹⁵ Kirkwood, *European Baptists: a Magnificent Minority*, p. 65.

¹⁶ David J. Hesselgrave, Edward Rommen, *Contextualization. Meanings, Methods, and Models* (Leicester, England: Apollos, 1989), p. 28.

¹⁷ Dean Gilliland, (ed.), *The World Among Us: Contextualizing Theology for Mission Today* (Dallas, Texas: Word Publishing, 1989), pp. 12-13.

‘something that must speak to every aspect of human life’¹⁸ quotes words of Paul VI from *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, where we read: ‘what matters is to evangelize human culture and cultures..., always taking the person as one’s starting point and always coming back to the relationships of people among themselves and with God.’¹⁹

Nevertheless, both these definitions speak about the relationship between the Gospel and culture, and stress the influence that the Good News should have on society.

Another definition can be found in results published by the World Council of Churches of a study on gospel and culture which presented their description of contextualisation. According to the WCC ‘[w]hen faith is contextual, there is a recognition that the gospel speaks to Christians (1) in their language, (2) connects with their symbols, (3) addresses their needs, and (4) awakens their creative energies...’²⁰

Let us then evaluate Baptist missionary activity in Poland in the 19th century in the light of these definitions, especially the last one, as it gives some points that can help us to accomplish our task.

2.1 Contextualisation ‘...in their language’

First of all, it should be noted that the context into which the new Baptist movement entered was not that different, in terms of religious attitudes, from what we can see in modern Poland. In spite of the partition and differences in state churches, the majority of the population could be classified as nominal Christians. This term ‘nominal’ needs some explanation, as there are different ways of defining its meaning. Here I am using it according to the definition presented in the Lausanne Occasional Papers, where we read:

A nominal Protestant Christian is one who, within the Protestant tradition, would call himself a Christian, or be so regarded by others, but who has no authentic commitment to Christ based on personal faith. Such commitment involves a transforming personal relationship with Christ, characterized by such qualities as love, joy, peace, a desire to study the Bible, prayer, fellowship with other

¹⁸ Stephen B. Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology. Revised and Expanded Edition* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2002), p. 15.

¹⁹ Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, Apostolic Exhortation on Evangelization in the Modern World (Washington DC: United States Catholic Conference, 1976), p. 20, in Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology*, p. 15.

²⁰ ‘International Review of Mission’, 1996, No. 85, p. 337, in James A. Scherer and Stephen B. Bevans, (eds.), *New Directions in Mission and Evangelization 3: Faith and Culture* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1999), p. 185.

Christians, a determination to witness faithfully, a deep concern for God's will to be done on earth, and a living hope of heaven to come.²¹

As mentioned in the historical part of this article, Baptist mission started from revival groups in the Protestant Church and Mennonite circles. Members of these groups were not satisfied with the lukewarm Christianity present in their churches and were open for new ideas and teachings.²²

Missionaries who came to Poland witnessed to those people for a number of reasons. To start with, they spoke the same language – German – and were already interested in the message that challenged the present *status quo*. In addition, people in the Bible study groups were already dissatisfied with the teaching they received from the pulpits in their churches. They were aware of the discrepancy between what was being preached and what they read in Holy Scripture.²³

This could also be achieved because missionaries were very active in printing and distributing Bibles and religious literature.²⁴ Being able to communicate with a target group in their mother tongue on a very deep level was an immense help in spreading Baptist beliefs and convictions.

2.2. Contextualisation ‘... connects with their symbols’

Right from the start, missionaries established churches that emphasised the importance of common Bible reading, hospitality, participation in communal prayer, celebrating baptism and the Eucharist, and sharing the Good News with others, in spite of their church affiliation. Some of these elements were already known to new converts from their church background, others from the general influence of their culture.

What Baptist missionaries introduced were mostly new expressions and meanings of old traditions and practices. So, for example, Baptists presented their doctrine as the true explanation of biblical teaching and were ready to defend their beliefs from Scripture. They challenged people to consider the question of baptism, which for them was the real seal of their commitment to Christ. They stressed the need for the baptism of adults so strongly because, among other reasons, this was a visible sign of

²¹ Lausanne Occasional Papers No. 23 Thailand Report, *Christian Witness to Nominal Christians Among Protestant Christians* (Wheaton, Ill.: Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization, 1980), p. 5.

²² See footnote 9 above on p. 35.

²³ Tomaszewski, *Baptysci w Polsce w latach 1858-1918*, pp. 15-16.

²⁴ See, for example, *ibid.*, p. 40.

entering into a community of ‘resident aliens’ which differed significantly from the community of a state church into which a person was born.²⁵

Of course, this created opposition from the state churches: from the Protestant Church in Prussia, from the Orthodox Church in Russia (there was also opposition from the Protestant Church in Russia which was a minority church but which had some rights and was tolerated by the government) and from the Catholic Church in Austria. As a result of this persecution, the Baptists were given a chance to show practically the difference between their version of Christianity and the version promoted by national churches. For many nominal Protestant Christians this difference was so appealing that they joined the Baptist Church despite persecutions. These people found, in Baptist communities, an alternative way of living out their faith and were willing to pay the price for it.²⁶

The same can be said about the ‘new’ meaning Baptist missionaries gave to the ‘old’ way of participation in the Eucharist. They stressed the importance of a communal experience of the Eucharist and they dispensed with consubstantiation, but did not introduce new elements.

Contextualisation does not mean total affirmation of the culture and acceptance of it but ‘incorporates and transforms elements of the cultural milieu, bringing these under the Lordship of Christ’.²⁷ This could be seen in another aspect of missionary activity in Poland at that time, the awareness of all who were involved in it of the hostility and resistance to the Gospel in the context of their ministry. Many times they had experienced that a secularised version of Protestant Christianity was not only immune to the Good News, but was actively involved in fighting against any change that threatened their ‘enlightened’, rationalistic culture. The highly secularised hierarchy of state churches was using every means, including collaboration with the occupying powers, to stop the spreading of this new movement, which for them was not sophisticated enough and had the taste of a sect.

2.3. Contextualisation ‘...addresses their needs’

What is truly amazing about this first wave of the Baptist missionary movement in Poland in the 19th century is its deep involvement in the social life around. There were churches that organised Sunday school classes for children where the young ones were taught not only Bible stories, but also

²⁵ See, for example, Bednarczyk, *Historia Zborow Baptystycznych w Polsce do 1939 roku*, pp. 27-28.

²⁶ Ibid., Chapters 1 and 2.

²⁷ Gilliland, *The World Among Us: Contextualizing Theology for Mission Today*, pp. 12-13.

how to write and read. Other churches carried out work among the sick and elderly.²⁸ Both initiatives had a very strong impact on local society.

A very good example of this involvement can be found in K. Bednarczyk's book, where the author quotes parts of the diary of a certain man, Stangnowski, who, in 1855, became the leader of a small Baptist church in Gojdy (a village in the Prussian part of Poland). Stangnowski writes about the change of attitude of the village authorities that took place after he was willing to help doctors during the outbreak of a cholera epidemic in the area. Many people became ill, but nobody wanted to take care of them. Villagers were afraid of becoming infected, and Stangnowski was the only person who was ready to sacrifice his health and maybe even his life to help those who suffered because of the epidemic. As a result of his attitude, all the charges and accusations that had been put forward by the authorities against him were dropped and he was cleared of each one of them.²⁹

It is very important to remember that, in spite of their involvement in society, the Baptists preserved their fidelity to the Good News, and avoided the trap of the 'Social Gospel' that identifies sin with ignorance and believes 'that knowledge and compassion would produce uplift as people rise to meet their potentials'.³⁰ They truly encountered their context with 'authentic gospel proclamation in word and deed'.³¹ It is no wonder that people observing the changed lives of new converts, their faithfulness to the message they proclaimed, their new attitude toward others, and their compassion evident in their social action, were drawn to this new movement.

Another proof of the involvement of these early Baptists in society can be found in their attitude toward laws and regulations present in different parts of Poland. There is no doubt that they used every possible, but lawful way, to lessen the persecution and defend themselves against accusations from the State Church's hierarchy. They wrote to governments and monarchs and presented the core of their beliefs in the hope that they would secure religious freedom both for themselves and for others. They used every regulation and law that could grant them the right to print and distribute Bibles, to organise church meetings and Sunday schools or to carry out any meaningful social work.³²

²⁸ See, for example, Bednarczyk, *Historia Zborow Baptistycznych w Polsce do 1939 roku*, p. 75.

²⁹ Bednarczyk, *Historia Zborow Baptistycznych w Polsce do 1939 roku*, p. 46.

³⁰ Bosch, *Transforming Mission. Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*, p. 382.

³¹ Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology. Revised and Expanded Edition*, p. 119.

³² For example, an official letter of G.F. Alf to 'The High Commission of the Internal Affairs in the Government', from Tomaszewski, *Baptystyci w Polsce w latach 1858-1918*, p. 60.

At the same time, they were very clear that no government has the right to stop them from sharing the Good News. They were put into prison,³³ exiled to Siberia or Kazakhstan, forced to leave their homes; but wherever they went, they witnessed to the Gospel both in deed and in word.

2.4. Contextualisation ‘... awakens their creative energies’

This last point can be seen in the Baptists’ attitude toward persecutions, government and society. As I have already mentioned, the missionaries were very active in finding ways in which to voice their convictions and defend their rights. They also used popular cultural means to spread the Good News, such as literature distribution, church choirs or church orchestras.³⁴

There can be no doubt that Baptist missionaries in Poland in the 19th century had some success in evangelising ‘human culture’. They presented the Good News well in the context of German-speaking nominal Protestants. Yet, at the same time, we cannot ignore the fact that the Baptist mission left the majority of the population untouched, and did not find any successful ways of sharing the Gospel with nominal Catholics.

The whole discussion in this paper has been limited to the analysis of the results of the mission that could be observed in history, and which were brought into existence by the activity and involvement of human carriers of the Good News.

Nevertheless, we have to admit that there was still another factor active in the success of this mission. Dean Gilliland, in his definition of contextualisation, stresses the importance of the guidance of the Holy Spirit in the process of translating the Gospel into a given context.³⁵ We have no ‘scientific’ ways of assessing the work of the Holy Spirit in the lives of individuals and churches, but some conclusions can be drawn from the fruits that result from these lives. What is left from the historical documents and stories about this first Baptist missionary work in Poland in the 19th century strongly suggest that the believers were very attentive to the voice and guidance of the Holy Spirit and tried to follow him wherever he led them.

³³ For example, Frederic Alf, a leader of the Baptist missionary movement in Congress Poland, was imprisoned many times for his beliefs (information about his life can be found in books mentioned in footnote 12 above, p. 36).

³⁴ See, for example, Tomaszewski, *Baptysci w Polsce w latach 1858-1918*, p. 82.

³⁵ Dean Gilliland, (ed.), *The World Among Us*, pp. 12-13.

Conclusion

What has been will be again, what has been done will be done again; there is nothing new under the sun. Is there anything of which one can say, Look! This is something new? It was here already, long ago; it was here before our time. There is no remembrance of men of old, and even those who are yet to come will not be remembered by those who follow.³⁶

These words spoken centuries ago encourage us to look at the present time with awareness that our questions have already been asked and some of them answered long ago. True wisdom is not afraid to look at the past and learn as many lessons as possible from old stories: on the contrary, it is suspicious of new trends and philosophies. If the author of the words quoted above was right, we can learn something from Baptist missionary activity in Poland in the 19th century.

To start with, we can observe that whatever model of contextualisation is being used, it will limit our efforts to the context in which it can produce results most easily. The ways used in Poland in the 19th century worked for Baptists, because they witnessed to people who were the easiest target. However, missionaries were not able to reach out to nominal Catholics, because that group could not be reached in the same way. That is not to say that what they did was wrong, or that their approach cannot be used for nominal Catholics in Poland. In fact, I believe that it can be applied to this group, but only when missionaries themselves come from the Catholic Church.

We can also see that Baptists (or any other evangelical group) should probably look for other ways of contextualising for their missionary work in Poland, especially if they want to reach out to nominal Catholics. Exactly what this would entail is not something I can address in this article, but I believe that it is a question that has to be answered by Polish Baptists if they really want to share the Good News with their nominal Catholic friends and neighbours.

The goal of this article has been to analyse the outcome of Baptist mission in Poland in the 19th century. I tried to achieve this goal by briefly discussing the history of Baptist mission, together with the political and religious situation in the country, and by presenting the issue of contextualisation. By looking at the results through the definition of contextualisation proposed in the paper of the WCC, I tried to assess the

³⁶ Ecclesiastes, 1:9-11 (NIV).

success of the presentation of the Good News in this particular context. I am fully aware that I was able to present only a very sketchy and, out of necessity, simplified discussion of this theme.

Nevertheless, I hope that even from such a limited presentation, some conclusions can be made that can stimulate further analysis and research. Our 21st century certainly presents Christians with many challenges and tasks. We have to find ways of presenting the Gospel in such a way that it can be understood by modern men and women, whether secular or nominally religious, in Poland as well as in other countries of our world, a world that becomes more like a 'global village' but at the same time tries to stress cultural and national differences.

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Faithful to the Risen Christ: Towards an Environmental Ethics in Estonian Baptistic Communities

Introduction

In this article I wish to reflect on the role of environmental issues in the worship and spiritual life of Estonian baptistic communities¹ and to assess their attitude towards sustainable development. A short study of some key texts reveals a major gap in covering environmental issues in the worship and spiritual life of Estonian baptistic communities. I will then turn to discuss a possible starting point for these communities in order to develop an ethics that includes the environmental task.

After identifying the lack of environmental concern among Estonian baptistic communities in the first section, the second section will explore the current understanding of the Christ event² occupying the central place in baptistic belief and ethics. The third section moves towards the revision of the current understanding of the Christ event and broadens it with the addition of eschatological and cosmic dimensions. Based on this revision, the fourth section discusses the possibilities of building a faithful environmental ethics. The last section offers a possible practical starting point for the faith communities to revise their worship language in order to contribute to the understanding of the faith community's environmental task and to move towards an ethics that reflects faithfulness to the risen Christ.

¹ The Union of Evangelical Christian and Baptist Churches of Estonia (UECBC) consists of several Christian groups including Baptist, Evangelical Christian, Pentecostal and Free Churches. In addition, there are several other groups and unions beside the UECBC that can be similarly characterised by the five distinctive features presented by James Wm. McClendon and are distinct from mainstream Protestant churches. See James Wm. McClendon, Jr., *Systematic Theology: Ethics, Vol I* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2000), pp. 27-8.

² In using the term 'Christ event' I draw on Jürgen Moltmann. He discusses the meaning of the Christ event in the context of his 'Theology of Hope' and argues that the cross and resurrection of Christ has to be understood not only historically but in the framework of eschatological expectation. The Christ event contains the eschatological promise of God's righteousness in every sphere of life, the resurrection of the dead and the ultimate lordship of the risen Christ. So the Christ event cannot be understood as the final fulfilment of these promises which must be perceived in the Christian hope that expects all these things to happen in the 'future of Christ'. However, the Christ event and the future of Christ are inseparable, as the eschatological promise of the Christ event 'causes the present that can be experienced at any given moment to become historic by breaking away from the past and breaking out towards the things that are to come'. See Jürgen Moltmann, *Theology of Hope: On the Ground and the Implications of a Christian Eschatology* (London: SCM Press, 1967), pp. 20, 190, 224-9.

No practice, no agenda?

It is difficult to talk about the theology of creation or agenda of sustainable development in Estonian baptistic communities, as there are neither written documents available nor official discussions held on that issue. A short chapter in 'Bible Teaching in Evangelical Christian and Baptist Churches' indicates the official rhetoric about God as the creator, and the human being as the one who has to take care of God's creation, and God's beautiful creation as something to be thankful for.³ However, these statements have hardly been developed into teaching or practices amongst baptistic communities. Also, assumptions discovered in hymns, prayers and sermons speak of a different language which merits talk of a 'hidden agenda of the theology of creation', not verbalised, yet leading people in their every day decisions.

This 'hidden agenda' can be traced in many songs that were introduced to Estonian baptistic communities by the 19th century revival movement. The lyrics of these songs often contrasts the 'real home' in heaven with the perishable and hostile 'earthly home', stressing the other-worldliness of all true believers and encouraging them to rescue other souls from this evil world. Many of these songs are still widespread and in use during worship services.⁴

Robert Võsu⁵ describes several problems faced by contemporary humankind. Among other issues, he briefly draws his readers' attention to global pollution caused by industrial development. However, he does not assume that the Christian community might have a significant role to play in improving the current environmental situation. Mentioning that frugal and immaculate lifestyle is a virtue (1Tim 6:8), he encourages people to hold their heads high and not to become frightened of evil things appearing in the last days of the world as described in the book of Revelation (8:11). These evil things, including environmental disasters, are interpreted as divine signs of the last days, so there is no sense to fight against them or to try to turn them into good. Instead of this, he encourages people to wait for the new heaven and earth (2Pt 3:13).⁶

³ Piibli õpetus EKB Liidu kogudustes [The Bible Teaching in Evangelical Christian and Baptist Churches], cited 4.3.2005. Online: www.ekklesia.ee

⁴ I have explored this issue in more detail in an unpublished paper, 'Breaking the Silence: Should the Church in Estonia be interested in environmental matters?' (Prague: IBTS, 2005) Available through the author.

⁵ Robert Võsu (1914-1994) was one of the leading Estonian Baptist theologians during the Soviet time, working as the president of the Union of Estonian Evangelical and Baptist Churches from 1970-85, arranging theological studies for pastors and compiling text books for that purpose.

⁶ Robert Võsu, *Evangeelne eetika* [Evangelical Ethics] (Tallinn: Logos, 1996), pp. 255-6.

Such self-centred ethics is considered in order to encourage people to prepare themselves for the end times when they are invited to enter God's Kingdom without any 'spot and wrinkle' after Jesus Christ comes back to gather his people (1Tim 6:14-16).⁷ The frugal and immaculate life Võsu describes will assure the believers' innocence and purity, so that God's creation is not harmed anymore.

As the basis for evangelical ethics, Võsu describes Jesus' cross and resurrection as making the whole difference: believers who are 'born again' have new life, and have it already now. However, the new life is spiritual; earthly things will disappear with Christ's second coming and the general resurrection of the dead. Eschatology, postponed to the end of time when Christ will destroy all evil and establish his kingdom, appears to trace an image of the total destruction of the world at the end of history.

An ethics based on such withdrawal from the world may have been understood as a self-centred approach and one way for the church to survive during the Soviet time when the church did not have any opportunity to be involved in social and political issues. However, given the changes in the political situation and a different social status in society, the church should revise its understanding of the task of a Christian community in order to be faithful to the risen Christ. Such revision is also necessary in order to overcome the contradiction between the official rhetoric about God's good creation and the actual assumptions of church members.

In order to find a proper starting point for such revision, I will explore the idea of the Christ event that has a central place in baptistic belief.

What do Estonian baptistic communities believe and emphasise?

'The Bible Teaching in Evangelical Christian and Baptist Churches' summarises the essential aspects of baptistic belief. As the Christ event – his death and resurrection – has always had the central place in baptistic belief, the following overview of the part of the document dealing with this theme will help to understand its emphasis and inclinations.

The very purpose of Jesus' death was to fulfil God's redemptive plan for human beings. Through Jesus Christ, the God of love reached out to human beings captured by sin (Gal 4:4-5, Col 2:13-14, John 3:16). God

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 293.

sent his son in order to save humankind. During Jesus' earthly life, his words and deeds embodied God's presence in the midst of human community. Jesus completed his work when he died on the cross for every human being. God raised Jesus Christ from death and exalted him as the Lord of the present and the future, thus testifying to the credibility of his redeeming work. Therefore, Christ's death and resurrection is considered to have transforming power for all humanity. Every person accepting Jesus as their 'personal Saviour'⁸ will be redeemed and given a new life. This new life is feasible because of the Holy Spirit who comes to live in every redeemed person. Also, the resurrection of Jesus Christ is an assurance for the future resurrection of those who believe in him.⁹

Such interpretation proves to have an exceptionally human-centred approach towards the Christ event. Very often in proclamation as well as in worship such approach is expressed in the language of 'you and me', emphasising the exclusiveness of human beings to whom Christ's story is applicable – Christ was born, he lived, died and rose again in order to save 'you and me'¹⁰. The difference made by Christ's resurrection is also interpreted in the context of 'you and me': through Jesus' death and resurrection, those who believe in him will be 'born again' and given a new life. This new life begins already here and now. However, it is recognisable only with 'spiritual eyes'. The transformation that the Christ event brings is interpreted in terms of the spiritual change that every person who has been 'born again' carries within themselves.

As to environmental issues, this Christ event, having the central position in baptistic belief and, at the same time, being interpreted exclusively from the anthropocentric perspective, has hardly any contact point with the rest of creation. Christ's redemptive work is considered to be pertinent to human history only. The 'new life', which will characterise everything and everybody touched by the Christ event, is deemed a historic event of importance for every individual person as part of human history.

⁸ In evangelistic sermons the importance of an individual and personal decision to accept Christ as 'personal Saviour' is very much stressed in order to make people aware of their responsibility to exercise a holy life which is understood as a precondition of becoming a member of the holy church. The issue of the church's holiness, as understood in Estonian baptistic churches, is discussed by the author in 'Towards the Revision of Holiness: Analysis of Cooperation Between Samaria Mission and the Local Church' (Prague: IBTS, 2005) Available through the author.

⁹ The abstract of the 'The Bible Teaching in Evangelical Christian and Baptist Churches', ch. 4, 'God's revelation in Jesus Christ'. Piibli õpetus EKB Liidu kogudustes [The Bible Teaching in Evangelical Christian and Baptist Churches], cited 4.3.2005. Online: www.ekklisia.ee.

¹⁰ The expression 'you and me' is often used in proclamations and lyrics in order to emphasise the personal and individual approach God has toward every single person.

The following section will touch upon the biblical understanding of the Christ event, broadening its meaning with the eschatological and cosmic dimensions. This work will be done primarily with the help of Jürgen Moltmann and James Wm. McClendon. Both of them have contributed to building a holistic understanding of Christ's redemptive work.

Towards a holistic understanding of the Christ event

Jürgen Moltmann argues that according to the understanding of the New Testament, the Christ event – his passion and resurrection – is not only an historic event but is also, at the same time, eschatological and cosmic. He says that there can be no redemption for human beings without the redemption of the whole of perishable nature. So it is not enough to see Christ's resurrection merely as 'God's eschatological act in history'. We also have to understand it as *the first act in the new creation of the world*. Christ's resurrection is not just a historical event. It is a cosmic event too.¹¹ I will now look more closely at these two features – eschatological and cosmic – of the Christ event.

First, what does it mean for the Christ event to be an eschatological event? As McClendon puts it, '[e]schatology is about what lasts; it is also about what comes last, and about the history that leads from the one to another'.¹² Therefore, the Christ event should be understood as something that has already brought the new age into being. In other words, eschatology is not about things that will happen at the end time together with Christ's second coming, as it is often understood by Estonian baptistic communities. The future of God is already present in the risen Christ, introducing God's rule in history, here and now. However, the old age has not yet passed. McClendon describes this state as 'the time between the times', a struggle between the rules of the old and the new age. This struggle will last until Christ's second coming when everything in heaven and on earth will be brought together in him (Col 1:20, Eph 1:10).¹³

Second, what does it mean for the Christ event to be a cosmic event? Moltmann argues that Christ's resurrection marks 'the beginning of the eschatological transformation of the world by its creator'.¹⁴ This argument

¹¹ Jürgen Moltmann, *Jesus Christ for today's world* (London: SCM Press Ltd, 1995), p. 83.

¹² James Wm. McClendon, Jr. *Systematic Theology: Doctrine, Vol. II* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994), p. 96.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ Jürgen Moltmann, *The Crucified God: The Cross of Christ as the Foundation and Criticism of Christian Theology* (London: SCM Press Ltd, 1974), p. 162.

is based on the early Christian understanding that Christ's resurrection was not an isolated miracle that proved Christ's divinity, but the beginning of the general resurrection of all the righteous who have died (1 Cor 15:20-23).¹⁵ Resurrection of the dead, biblically understood as resurrection of bodies, is part of the transformation of all creation. In other words, eschatology has to be understood as a this-worldly, transformative progression towards the ultimate Kingdom of God. It is a process, an ongoing story of Christ taking place in history in which God himself and his people are participating. McClendon describes this process as the time during which the formation of God's people takes place. Establishing this kind of new community has a specific purpose: under the living lordship of the risen Christ, the community of his people is intended to rule the world (Rev 5:9).¹⁶ So the transformation of the cosmos towards its ultimate goal is carried out in cooperation between God and his people. In the framework of this cooperation, the rules of God's Kingdom will be applied in every sphere of relationships in the 'community of creation'.¹⁷

Considering the eschatological and cosmic dimension of the Christ event, Moltmann states that

in faith in the risen Jesus, men already live in the midst of the transitory world of death from the powers of the new world of life that have dawned in him. There is already true life in the midst of false life, though only in communion with the one who had been crucified by that false life. 'The future has already begun'. Jesus' resurrection already makes possible the impossible, namely reconciliation in the midst of strife, the law of grace in the midst of judgment, and creative love in the midst of legalism.¹⁸

Understanding the Christ event holistically and considering all its different aspects in the framework of the ongoing Christ story brings everything – all the relationships among all the parties of creation and between creation and its Creator – under the living lordship of Jesus Christ.¹⁹ This means that the 'new creation' introduced with Christ's resurrection applies to the entire cosmos, and can be interpreted neither

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ McClendon, *Doctrine*, pp. 96, 98.

¹⁷ The term 'community of creation' is introduced by Jürgen Moltmann; it considers human beings as one of the members of the whole creation who will have mutual, continuous and sustainable relationship with other community members, whether human or non-human. Moltmann, *God in Creation: An Ecological Doctrine of Creation* (London: SCM Press, 1985), p. 3.

¹⁸ Moltmann, *The Crucified God*, p. 171.

¹⁹ Thomas Finger, 'An Anabaptist/Mennonite Theology of Creation' in *Creation & the Environment: An Anabaptist perspective on a sustainable world*, ed. Calvin Redekop (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 2000), p. 156.

anthropologically nor individually. Thus the ethics applied in the new type of community operating in the power of the risen Christ will include all the parties of God's creation in order to live out God's future that has already begun.

Building environmental ethics centred on the Christ event

The Christ event – his death and resurrection – has always occupied the central place in baptistic theology. Moreover, as McClendon states, 'the resurrection of Jesus Christ from death is at the centre of Christian morality, providing a new ground, a new outlook, a new dynamism for followers of the Way.'²⁰ However, the traditional anthropocentric and individualistic interpretation have been the grounds for an ethics that primarily focuses on developing personal 'holiness' in order to prepare oneself for the day when Christ returns to gather all the righteous.

McClendon argues that an ethics based on Christ's resurrection will make a difference in Christian practice in every aspect of life, bringing the Christian community into a transforming interaction with its surroundings and thereby being a witness to society.²¹ He also argues that '[p]resence is one of the profound forms of Christian witness', where being present means the quality of '*being there* for and with the other'.²² Although McClendon describes the virtue of presence primarily in the context of human relationships, the cosmic and eschatological nature of Christ's resurrection, I believe, allows for the broadening of the necessity of practising this virtue towards non-human creation: being there *with* creation (emphasis mine). It becomes increasingly important in the light of the global environmental crisis and in the context of growing urbanisation, which, started in the modern times, has been expanding rapidly and has resulted in the alienation of humans from their natural environment.

Expanding the applicability of the virtue of presence upon human relationships with non-human creation has at least two perspectives. First, being there for and with non-human creation is essential in order to participate in God's continuous creative work. Contrary to the widespread view that God finished his work of creation on the seventh day and gave it over to people to be used for their own sake, Paul maintains that, so far,

²⁰ James Wm. McClendon, *Systematic Theology: Ethics*, p. 276.

²¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 276-7.

²² See the term 'virtue of presence' discussed by James Wm. McClendon, *Ethics*, pp. 115-8.

creation has not reached its ultimate goal as intended by God.²³ William H. Harrison, analysing the theology of Dorothy L. Sayers, sees the central claim of her work to be the statement that ‘we are called to be co-creators with God’. Sayers’s study on after-war work ethics argues that ‘work must be understood as a participation in the reign of God’: otherwise, seeing work as a mere means to survive or to assure one’s wealth ends up in a ‘destructive, materialist ethics of capitalism and socialism’.²⁴ Separating work from religious life is obviously one of the reasons causing human alienation from the rest of creation, subduing it to the level of resources for covering every-day needs as well as pleasure, and producing a destructive and profit-minded attitude. Understanding work, as Sayers proposes, opens the perspective and underlines the necessity of participating in God’s creative work so that everything in heaven and on earth could be held together and sustained in Christ (Col 1:17, Heb 1:3). Such an approach towards creation requires practising the virtue of presence – being there, not only to cultivate the land, but doing it in such a way that the ground water as well as other species and their habitats survive, and that the earth would bear fruit; being there not only to cut the trees but participating in the forest life-cycle in order to avoid deforestation; being there not only to catch tons and tons of fish but creating systems that assure the well-being of their environment in sufficient numbers so that they could continue breeding and multiplying; being there not only to enjoy the water by taking a shower twice on a hot summer day but also developing the water treatment facilities in order to use available resources in the best possible way and produce new resources. *Being there* with non-human creation certainly means a willingness to understand how the earth’s ecosystem functions, and participating in it in a creative, sustainable and reproductive way, whether it concerns agriculture, fishery, forest industry, water management or small every-day activities which may not seem destructive at first glance.

The second perspective of practising the virtue of presence for non-human creation is its protective aspect. Besides the creative participation in God’s work, the Christian community is called to be involved in the struggle which is characteristic of ‘the time between the times’. This is the struggle that Moltmann describes as ‘the scandal of the qualitative

²³ Dorothy Jean Weaver, ‘The New Testament and the Environment: Toward a Christology for the Cosmos’ in *Creation & the Environment*, p. 133.

²⁴ William H. Harrison, ‘Loving the Creation, Loving the Creator: Dorothy L. Sayers’s Theology of Work’ in *Anglican Theological Review*, 86:2. A similar view is supported also by Dorothy Jean Weaver, who claims that Jesus, healing sick people, taking authority over natural forces and providing food for hungry people, continued God’s creative work as well as commissioning his disciples to do the same. See Weaver, ‘The New Testament and the Environment’, pp. 124-30.

difference' between the old world and the new world, which has been brought into existence through the Christ event.²⁵ He says that the Christ event and God's Kingdom established on the earth by this event has to be demonstrated 'through the freedom of a faith which runs contrary to this world'.²⁶ Living out the rule of God in this world is the primary task of the faith community which desires to be faithful to the risen Christ. However, the cosmic nature of the Christ event does not allow God's rule to be limited to human relationships only. *Being there* with the other members of the 'community of creation' that are constantly under attack because of a powerful, destructive and profit-minded human attitude urges the taking of responsibility, stepping closer, caring for and protecting suffering creation.

Acknowledging God's presence with us as well as with non-human creation would lead humanity to practise the virtue of presence within the entire 'community of creation'. Furthermore, the eschatological and cosmic nature of the Christ event opens up the understanding of an eschatological future that cannot be cut off from the current world and human activities within its history. Human activities done here and now are significant if the new heaven and earth are to be restored. Therefore, eschatology emphasises rather than suspends the importance of the human responsibility to care for God's creation.²⁷

Coming to the practical side of the environmental task, we can ask how we bring the idea of responsible care closer to people alienated from nature. Spending most of their life in concrete cities and therefore often being cut off from the beauty of creation, or considering heaven and earth as realms that will be destroyed one day – and other reasons that space does not permit me to discuss – have shaped the worship language of Estonian baptistic communities. The next section will initiate a discussion about the importance of including creation language in worship services in order to contribute to the understanding of the faith community's environmental task, an important part of its entire mission in contemporary society.

Worshipping God the Creator: Establishing grounds for environmental ethics

People's relationship to God and to the rest of creation can be at least partly discerned from the framework of worship services. As I have argued,

²⁵ Here Moltmann is following the observation of R. Smend. See Moltmann, *The Crucified God*, p. 173.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ Cf. also Gregory Brett, 'A Timely Reminder: Humanity and Ecology in the Light of Christian Hope' in *Earth Revealing – Earth Healing*, ed. Denis Edwards (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 2001), p. 167.

worship services in Estonian baptistic churches are intended to focus on how to love and serve God, live a moral life, and care for others – issues which really matter in everyday life and therefore also indicate the perception of the relationship to God. These are the areas of life for which God's help and guidance are asked. These are the areas for which God is worshipped. Whilst exploring the faith community's environmental task, the place and role of creation language within worship must be discussed. This task cannot be carried out in the framework of this paper; therefore only two aspects will be briefly described: first, the importance of creation language in contributing to the understanding of faith's communal nature, and, secondly, the importance of creation language in establishing the grounds for the relationship with God as Creator.

Bernhard W. Anderson argues that creation language in Israel's language of worship (see e.g. Psalms 8, 19, 24, 95, 104) is theologically related to God's redeeming work, giving grounds for praising him, evoking people's understanding of who they really are and what their role is as a part of the created world. He claims that creation language, expressing faith in God the Creator who is constantly taking care of his work, 'has to do with the meaning of human life – not only the meaning of *my* life in the world here and now but also the meaning of the whole historical process that unfolds between the horizons of beginning and end'.²⁸ In the context of contemporary Estonian baptistic communities that often identify themselves as groups consisting of individual people and, therefore, concentrate on the importance of a personal relationship with God, the communal nature of faith is obviously underestimated. Worshipping God as Creator helps to draw the focus from a single individual to the whole 'community of creation', in which every member has an intrinsic value. Acknowledging God's relationship with his creation, including non-human creation, helps to establish both 'vertical' and 'horizontal' relationships within the 'community of creation'.²⁹

In addition, the importance of including creation language into worship helps 'to shift the accent from creation as the event in the beginning to a relationship in the present, from the initiating act of Creator

²⁸ Relying on Claus Westermann's work, Anderson argues that Israel's creation story, without having the pretension of being a scientific explanation about the beginning of the world, expresses people's faith in God as Creator, and acts as the opening story to the whole of history and God's redemptive work in it. See Bernhard W. Anderson, *From Creation to New Creation: Old Testament perspectives* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1994), pp. 208-10.

²⁹ For further discussion on 'vertical' and 'horizontal' relationships see Richard Bauckham, 'Stewardship and Relationship' in *The care of creation: Focusing concern and action*, ed. R. J. Berry (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 2000), pp. 99-106.

to the creature's dependence on the Creator.'³⁰ In contemporary Estonian baptistic communities, there is a tendency to identify God as Creator mainly through the creation narrative in Genesis. The creation account belongs primarily to the collection of stories told in Sunday School in order to introduce children to how God created the world. Aside from the creation story, God is presented mainly as one's personal God, taking care of 'you and me'. Interpreting God's creative activities within the context of the faith community's worship opens up new perspectives to comprehend God as God of the whole of creation, as God who is bringing his creation – his people as well as every other member of the 'community of creation' – towards its ultimate goal under Christ's lordship.

Revising the notion of the communal nature of faith as well as of relationships within the 'community of creation' may be seen as a first step to be taken towards faithfulness to the risen Christ and an ethics that reflects this faithfulness.

*Darkness is gone*³¹

Darkness is gone, daylight has come:
The Son of God and man arises with the dawn.
Death loses its sinister sting:
God's promise to do a new thing
Is done, and Hallelujah!

Earth joins heaven to sing.
See now the cross, see now the grave:
They, vacant, celebrate how God's foolishness can save.
The criminal nailed as a fraud
Is raised by the power of God
And lives. So, Hallelujah!

Scatter the news abroad.
Greener the grass, brighter the sun,
The God-loved world proclaims a new age has begun.
Creation is decked for her guest
Who, freed from his grave clothes, is dressed
In light and, Hallelujah!
Tells that the earth is blessed.
[...]

³⁰ Anderson, *From Creation to New Creation*, p. 211.

³¹ 'Darkness is gone', words and music by Iona Community. In John L. Bell and Graham A. Maule, *Iona Community: Enemy of Apathy* (Glasgow: Iona Community, 1990), p. 71.

Conclusion

Caring for the environment is currently not listed among the activities typical for Estonian baptistic communities. The key factors resulting in the lack of awareness of environmental issues are a self-centred ethics focusing on personal holiness, an anthropocentric understanding of the Christ event, and a perception of eschatology that is postponed beyond history. Although there is nothing written on environmental issues, the hidden agenda emphasising the other-worldliness of believers can be traced back to songs, sermons and doctrinal texts. Therefore, I have focused on the importance of Christ's death and resurrection, central to baptistic belief, in order to move towards an ethics that is faithful to the risen Christ. Drawing primarily from the insights of Jürgen Moltmann and James Wm. McClendon, I have argued that in order to establish a faithful environmental ethics, the current anthropocentric understanding of the Christ event must be revised and broadened with eschatological and cosmic dimensions, shifting the understanding of this event towards a more holistic approach. This shift, indeed, urges us to include caring for God's creation in the variety of practices of faith communities.

This raises another question for faith communities. How to bring the idea of responsible care close to its members who are often alienated from non-human creation? I propose that including creation language in the worship services of faith communities helps to contribute to the understanding of its environmental task. Worshipping God as Creator aids in drawing the focus from a single individual to the whole 'community of creation' and thus the move towards an ethics faithful to this task.

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Book Reviews

Hans de Wit, Louis Jonker, Marleen Kool, Daniel Schipani (eds)
Through the Eyes of Another – Intercultural Reading of the Bible
(Institute of Mennonite Studies, Vrije Universiteit, Amsterdam), Elkhart, Indiana, 2004

It is only during the last 5 years, in rediscovering the rich scholarly debate on hermeneutics, including Anabaptist hermeneutics, that I have seriously started to question my modernist biblical hermeneutic, where the hermeneutical key rests in the hands of a skilled theologian. This book, amongst others, continues to expand my view and teach me to appreciate multipolar approaches and especially the intercultural reading of the Bible.

It is a book written primarily by and for theologians, speaking a language they understand. Although primarily initiated by theologians coming from a western worldview, it communicates much more than the usual bipolar hermeneutical concepts. It goes to about 120 different global communities which are not dominated by the reading of academic exegesis, but are comprised of ordinary Bible readers from a variety of denominational contexts from over 30 countries. And while all communities were reading the same Bible text from John 4:1-42 about Jesus and the Samaritan woman, the richness of both the local communities' readings and especially – what makes this book and project so valuable – the intercultural reading of this text in John becomes obvious.

We see the rich outcome in the communities' readings of the text, widening the spectrum and sometimes contradicting the interpretations of other groups, as the curious article titles in the book suggest: ie. 'Jesus' surprising offer of living cocaine', 'Jesus among the ancestors'. When quotations of discussion outcomes of different groups appear, the reader receives a glimpse of what actually happened during the reading and interpretation process and then during the cross-cultural communication between the groups. This means that the project expands beyond the different outcomes that were collected by the supervisors of the project. They were able to connect the different groups so that they could communicate with each other about their context and setting and try to read and understand what the other group discovered in the text. The experience of such intercultural reading is challenging to both the bipolar Bible reading often dominated by the West and the supremacy of interpretation by scholarly individuals. Certainly the result is not ideal, and those responsible for the process demonstrate realistic outcomes, failures and

problems. But it is an important attempt at global communal reading of the text that makes sense in both a global and local setting, inspiring a reading of the text in a real world for the real world, demonstrating again and again how much the context of the reader is of key importance in interpretation, without simply supporting the reader-response hermeneutics.

Without an advanced background in hermeneutical theory, the book has more limited value, and the reader partly misses the project's design, analysis and critique. Nevertheless, parts 2 and 3 may be read and enjoyed by those who are not familiar with the current hermeneutics debate but can experience the richness of the endless interpretations in and from different contexts. This kind of reading helps to envision what Paul Hiebert presents and illustrates in his book, *Mission Implications of Epistemological Shifts*, speaking about different local contextual and global theologies (113).

The project of intercultural Bible reading has many other assets. It emphasises the context and introduces and provokes contextual mission discussion on and beyond the text. This kind of reading underlines the significance of local cultural readings parallel to global reading, where different readings do not lead to opposites but widen the view, without the global dominating the local. And, in the best biblical way, it has an ecumenical outcome, helping different communities and individuals to read the Bible together and to listen to each other. It is a timely book, correctly emphasising these values after the dividing lines became so obvious again through and after the 9/11 events. Trying to hear and read through the eyes of the other helps to reduce both prejudice about the other and the sense of threat the other brings, and this is at the heart of Christian mission.

This book will help scholars to start learning to listen to the faith community of which they are a part and where they can receive so much instead of just teaching and giving. It presents a mirror that helps us to see ourselves as we try to read the Bible through the eyes of the other. It may question the present predominant way which keeps the Bible firmly in the hands of those who – if we may say with Jesus – sit in the seat of Moses. This project may be an inspiration for similar projects to bring faith communities from different denominational and cultural contexts to experience such intercultural Bible reading, thus helping to build bridges between cultures and different Christian communities. Personally, I hope to see more central and eastern European Christian communities become involved in similar projects.

**The Revd Dr Peter F Penner
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Peter F. Penner (ed.)

Theological Education As Mission

Schwarzenfeld, Neufeld, 2005, pp. 371, ISBN 3-937896-18-X

This volume is a collection of essays based on papers delivered at a conference held at IBTS in Prague in February 2005. As with all such volumes its strengths and weaknesses are linked to the diversity of views and approaches which are adopted.

The 18 papers and the introduction could be summed up according to their focus on one or other of the title's three key words: theology, education and mission. The majority concentrate, to my mind, more on theological education, with particular and praiseworthy attention to theological education for evangelicals in the countries of central and eastern Europe.

Two papers particularly, by Stephen Dinteman and Peter Penner, recognise, either wholly (the first) or partly (the second), that in itself theological education is a form of mission. Dinteman provides a fascinating and honest reflection on the work of the Lithuanian Christian College, giving one possible picture of how an American-style liberal arts college can offer space for mission. Penner, in his account of ways forward for theological education in the former Soviet Union, points to the fundamentally missionary nature of education. Thus the temptation to see rigorous intellectual engagement as at odds with mission is avoided and, positively, such engagement is seen as an integral part of Christian, therefore necessarily missionary, life.

Other papers deal more directly with theological education, and the way in which it can be used to support the missionary activity of churches. In an excellent article Duane Elmer looks at how certain theological virtues interact or inform education, examining the *imago Dei*, forgiveness (for me one of the best pieces of the work), common grace and the priesthood of all believers. For his part Parush Parushev argues for a twofold purpose of theological education, *ad intra*, forming people for mission, and *ad extra*, acting as mission agents to the public academy.

It is not possible even to mention all the essays in this review, but a mention of the final group of essays is necessary. These deal more with the question of education. Some are more case studies, such as Peter Penner's useful historical work on the EEST/CEETE and Walter Sawatsky's examination of western missionaries in countries of the former Soviet Union. Others, such as Linda Cannell and Einike Pilli look at different

models of education which may be of service in forming people for mission. Keith Jones writes from his experience as rector of IBTS on the challenges facing such institutions, whilst one of the library staff at IBTS, Katharina Penner, reflects on the importance of libraries in such institutions, and the actual situation many of them face.

As I mentioned at the beginning, it is a weakness and strength of the book that it is a collection of conference papers. The weakness, as even this brief review may demonstrate, is that the focus is sometimes diffuse. It may have been useful to divide the book into parts to help delineate issues more clearly. Moreover, some papers are undoubtedly better than others, which lends a certain unevenness to the work. On the other hand, the strength of the work lies in its bringing together experienced practitioners, and in allowing us to hear different voices reflecting on a variety of contexts. There is much that is both helpful and inspiring to those engaged in theological education, and I am sure that they will find much in this collection to stimulate their thinking on their mission as educators.

Tim F T Noble
Academic Team, IBTS

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Shaynah Neshama

We Testify

Xulon Press, USA, 2005, 166pp

Dr Shaynah Neshama from Bulgaria, who has had extensive experience as a social worker serving abused and neglected children and who also lectures in spiritual formation, has collected together in this book a remarkable series of testimonies of God's work in people's lives. The book is based on personal interviews which she undertook. The stories are from different countries, they include women and men from very varied backgrounds and cultures, and they are written in the first person, all of which adds to their powerful effect. The way in which Dr Neshama has chosen and woven together these stories brings out both the depths of the trauma that the people concerned have suffered and the reality of healing through divine grace. This is not intended to be an academic book, but books such as this do contribute to the field of applied theology since they deal with the actual spiritual experiences that form part of the journeys of individuals. Here we have profound and challenging insights into how Christian faith is being lived out in the contemporary world.

Janice and Ian Randall